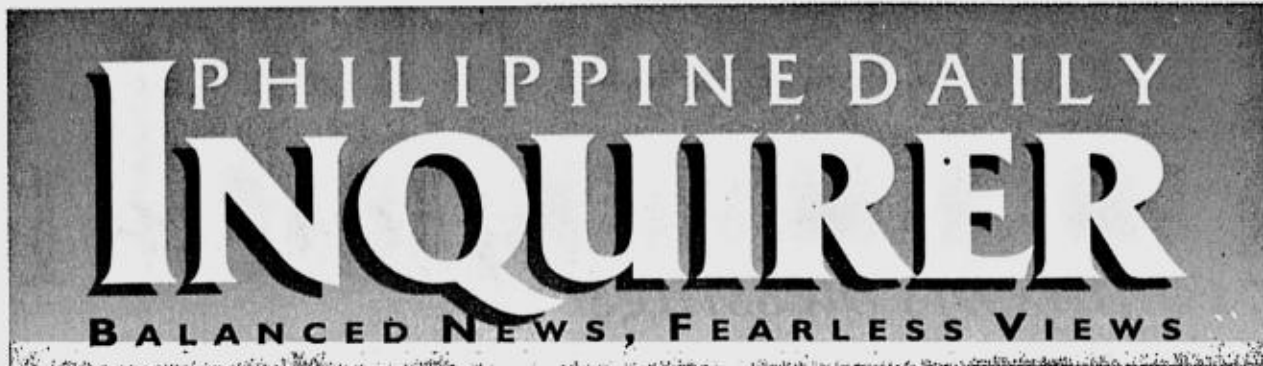


Montayre surfaces, also calls for 'No-el'



MOVE over, Pastor "Boy" Saycon. Here comes Linda Montayre. After months of silence, Montayre, chair of the People's Consultative Assembly-Koalisyon, yesterday came out in the MONTAYRE/A14

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph



Tuesday, February 3, 2004 ★★ 38 pages / 3 sections / vol. 19 / no. 57

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website: www.inq7.net

WHAT'S INSIDE

- T-bill rates rise BUSINESS/B1
- PNP report identifies 12 Metro 'hot spots' METRO/A15
- Photo shop worker fingers Manapat NEWS/A3

Foreign investors dump RP stocks

Political instability, weakening peso cited

By Doris C. Dumlaog
Business

SPOOKED by mounting political uncertainty and weak regional markets, foreign fund managers dumped Philippine shares, causing the biggest single-day fall in 17 months.

The main share index fell 4.06 percent, or 61.25 points, to 1,447.05 on turnover of P817 million. It was the biggest decline since July 3, 2002 when the index tumbled 4.08 percent.

The market, which rallied to its highest in nearly three years last month, is now up just 0.32 percent so far this year.

"This is due to the country's political instability which has weakened the peso. So that's two huge factors. If you are a foreign investor, that's a double whammy," Spencer Yap, BPI Securities investment analyst, said.

The peso surrendered its early gains to close lower against the US dollar, weighed down by the steep decline in the local stock market, traders said. It closed at P56.045 against the dollar, weaker than the P55.980 on Friday.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the country's largest phone firm, led decliners, dropping 5.78 percent or P50 to P815. PLDT dragged down the

market after its American Depository Receipts sharply fell in the New York Stock Exchange last week. Second-ranked Globe Telecom Inc. fell 4.86 percent or P45 to P880.

"B" shares of power distributor Manila Electric Co., which are open to foreign investors, lost 7.35 percent or P2.50 at P31.50.

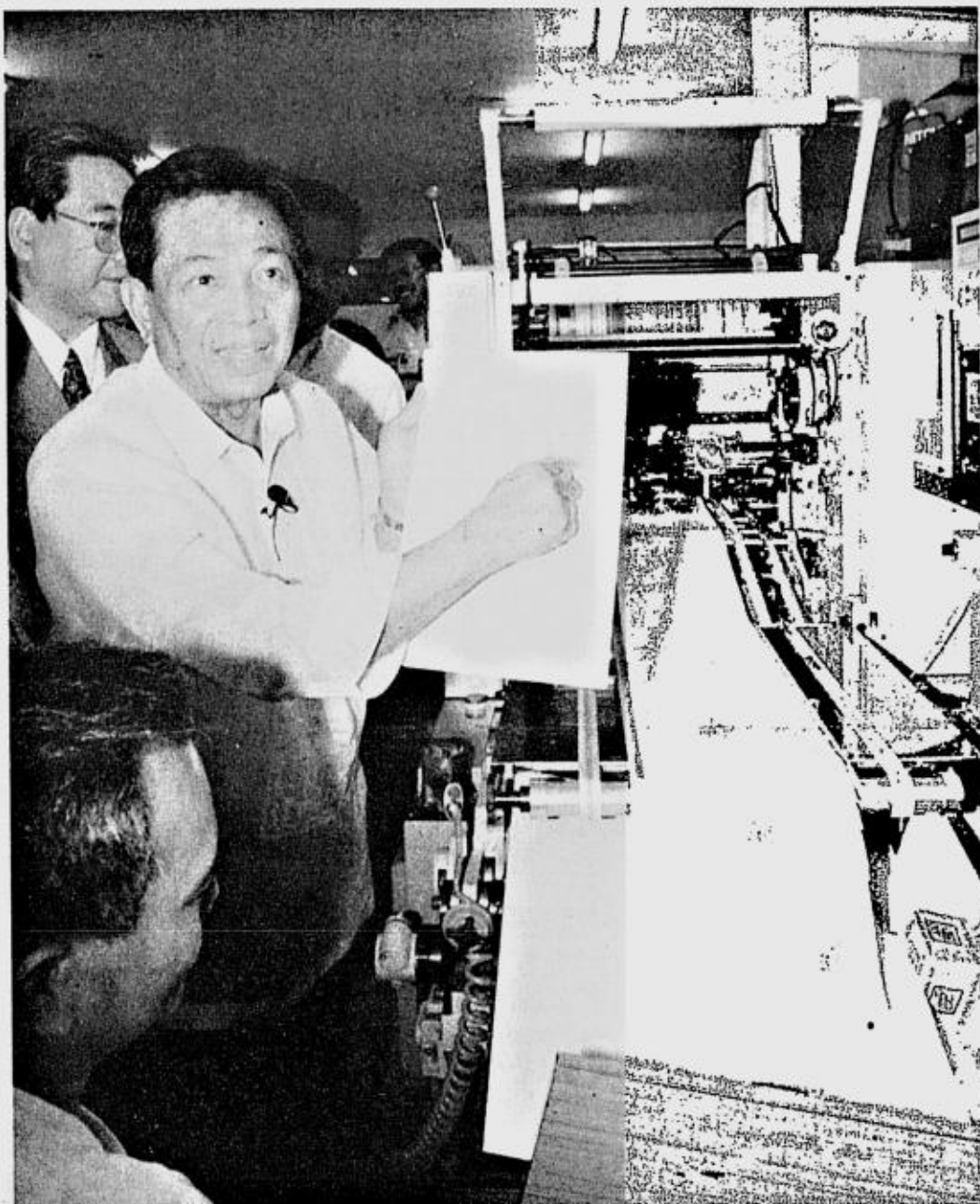
In the broader market, 51 stocks declined and only eight rose. There were 26 stocks unchanged.

"Foreign funds were selling heavily, apparently due to the events of last week," Yap said.

Rumored destabilization plots were not helping market sentiment, according to Astro del Castillo, Association of Securities Analysts of the Philippines director.

On Friday, government investigators said they were preparing sedition charges against a retired general and three other people linked to front-running president.

FOREIGN/A14



FIRST PRINTING

Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos shows to journalists a sample of the official ballot during the first print run of ballots for the May elections at the National Printing Office in Quezon City. (Story on Page A4).

JOAN BONDOC

NPC divided into Poe, Macapagal factions

By Carlito Pablo

THE PRESIDENTIAL race has split the Nationalist People's Coalition, the country's second-largest political party, down the middle.

Yesterday, Rep. Francis Escudero (Sorsogon) announced he was taking a leave of absence as

spokesperson and member of the executive committee of the NPC, the party founded by business tycoon Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., to cast his lot, together with about 20 other NPC congressmen, with opposition coalition candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

His father Salvador is running for senator under the Poe ticket.

Earlier, a group of NPC congressmen, also numbering about 20, declared their commitment to support President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Escudero emphasized that NPC members would remain with the party even though they might support different presidential candidates.

NPC stalwart and Cojuangco nephew Rep. Gilberto Teodoro Jr. (Tarlac) said the party strategy was clear.

"What is important for us are the local posts," Teodoro said, referring to the NPC's strength in the congressional and gubernatorial positions.

NPC/A7

GMA allots P3B for PhilHealth program

By Blanche S. Rivera and Juliet L. Javellana

IN WHAT the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. called "an unprecedented move," the government yesterday said PhilHealth would accept five million heads of family as new members this year.

President Macapagal-Arroyo announced the ambitious extension of the national health insurance program, saying she had allotted P3 billion to fund it.

PhilHealth president Francisco Duque III immediately countered suspicions that the "universal health insurance" program was meant to boost Ms Macapagal's election bid.

"This should not be misconstrued as a campaign move because this is just the completion

GMA ALLOTS/A6



PRESIDENT Macapagal arrives at the PICC for the launching of the "Family Health Insurance for All" program. With her are Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit and PCSO Chair Honeygirl de Leon.

JESS YUSON



ANGEL Emery-Wade survived five days beside her dead mother.

AP

Girl in crash survives on crackers

LOS ANGELES—A toddler survived for five days on crackers while clinging to the body of her mother after being trapped in the wreckage of a deadly car crash, police said.

The 3-year-old girl was found by a police patrol on Monday after surviving the accident and freezing temperatures after her mother's car careened off the road in an isolated part of the western state of Arizona last week.

"We found her... far from a highway, inside a car huddling next to her mother's

GIRL/A14

Asia's bird flu deaths rise to 12

BANGKOK—Two more people died from bird flu, bringing Asia's death toll to 12 on Monday. China said it suspected the virus has reached poultry in one of its most remote corners and UN officials warned that the outbreak was far from over.

A teenage boy in Vietnam died Monday, and a 58-year-old woman in Thailand who had died earlier was confirmed Monday as a bird flu victim following an autopsy, officials said.

The bird flu sweeping the region is "far from being under control," said He Changchui of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. "It remains a serious public health and animal threat, particularly in China, Thailand and Vietnam."

"So far, more than 45 million chickens have been culled, excluding China" in efforts to contain the disease, he said.

The World Health Organization continued investigating the deaths of two Vietnamese sisters who may have caught the disease through contact with their brother in what would be the first human-to-human transmission in this year's outbreak.

But the WHO said there was no evidence yet of a new strain that could easily be passed among people.

Investigators have failed to trace the sisters' infection to a specific event, such as contact with sick poultry, or an environ-

ASIA'S/A6

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FORECAST: Eastern Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers mostly over the eastern sections.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/03/04

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

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Laosag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
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"It is downright political skullduggery," Barbers said.

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Barbers likewise belittled speculation the administration was planning to funnel realigned funds under a reenacted budget to President Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign kitty.

Any realignment of funds, which is clearly within the powers of the executive branch, would be done within the purview of the Constitution, he said.

But administration Rep. Jacinto Paras questioned the wisdom of reshaping the 2003 budget in order to save money when the national budget is enacted precisely to pay for government spending requirements.

Paras said he was present at a congressional caucus and the possibility of reenacting the 2003 budget was mentioned but was not agreed upon.

"We pressed the Senate to act on the budget, and when it did, the speaker and Congressman Andaya suddenly would not agree to it. That's plain stupidity because we never discussed reducing the budget in any floor deliberation," Paras said.

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AFP/AP

Corpus scolded for calling Loren 'political prostitute'

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According to Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero, AFP Public Information Office chief, Abaya also "verbally reprimanded" Corpus during an hour-long afternoon meeting at the army general headquarters in Camp Crame.

Lucero said the letter admonished Corpus "to be more prudent" in the future with

his remarks, which "might be used inadvertently for political propaganda, and compromise the apolitical character of the men and women of the AFP."

Corpus acknowledged his mistake in a short statement, saying, "It's my fault."

A member of the Philippine Military Academy Class '69, Corpus is considered senior to Abaya, a 1971 graduate of the West Point Military Academy.

On Sunday, Corpus was quoted in a newspaper (not the INQUIRER) linking Legarda, vice presidential bet of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, to a recently uncovered plot to overthrow the government.

He said Legarda would "do everything" to gain power.

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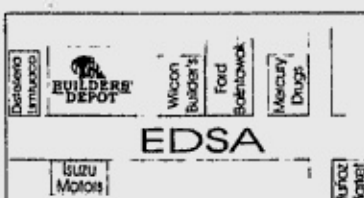
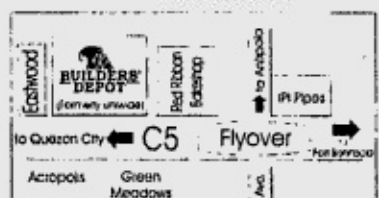
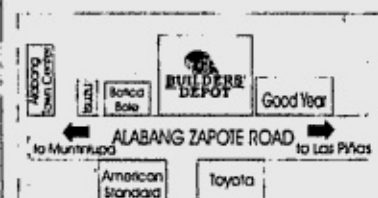
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SOURCE PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/03/04

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Second FRONT PAGE

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AFP, AP

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In a reprimand letter, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya warned Corpus not to repeat the "irresponsible statements against a duly elected government official"—or risk facing "more disciplinary action."

According to Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero, AFP Public Information Office chief, Abaya also "verbally reprimanded" Corpus during an hour-long afternoon meeting at the army general headquarters in Camp Crame.

Lucero said the letter admonished Corpus "to be more prudent" in the future with

his remarks, which "might be used inadvertently for political propaganda, and compromise the apolitical character of the men and women of the AFP."

Corpus acknowledged his mistake in a short statement, saying, "It's my fault."

A member of the Philippine Military Academy Class '69, Corpus is considered senior to Abaya, a 1971 graduate of the West Point Military Academy.

On Sunday, Corpus was quoted in a newspaper (not the INQUIRER) linking Legarda, vice presidential bet of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, to a recently uncovered plot to overthrow the government.

He said Legarda would "do everything" to gain power.

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Photo shop worker says Manapat ordered microfilm

By Christine O. Avendaño

A PHOTO shop employee told a Senate inquiry yesterday it was he who processed the two rolls of microfilm that ex-Director Ricardo Manapat had claimed he had discovered in the National Archives offices and which contained documents that proved that actor Fernando Poe Jr. was not a natural-born Filipino.

The documents were subsequently used to file a disqualification case against Poe before the Commission on Elections.

Before the Senate committee on constitutional amendments, William Duff, Florofoto

service supervisor, told the senators he was the one who put the microfilm rolls together in early January on Manapat's orders.

At the same hearing, Manapat's driver linked the fired archives chief to First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and Supreme Court Justice Antonio Carpio. Another archives employee linked Manapat to former National Security Adviser Jose Almonte.

Manapat did not show up at the Senate inquiry, however.

Duff told the senators that Manapat went to the Florofoto shop on Carlos Palanca Street in Quiapo, Manila on Jan. 10 and gave him 30 to 50 documents to put on microfilm.

Duff said his boss, Victor Floro, told him that Manapat did not want him to read the documents because they were "highly confidential."

Duff said Manapat later asked him to print copies of a birth certificate on the microfilm and this was when he was able to read its contents. He said the birth certificate was of Allan Fernando Poe, the presidential candidate's father.

He said he was made to read another roll of film and this one contained a marriage contract between Poe and a Paulita Gomez, as well as another document written in Spanish with the name of Gomez on it.

Floro corroborated Duff's testimony.

At the same hearing, Manapat's driver, Felix Loqueng, said he had dropped his boss off twice in December at the LTA Building on Perea Street in Makati City, which happens to be the office building of Mike Arroyo.

"He told me he had a meeting with his lawyers there," Loqueng told the committee.

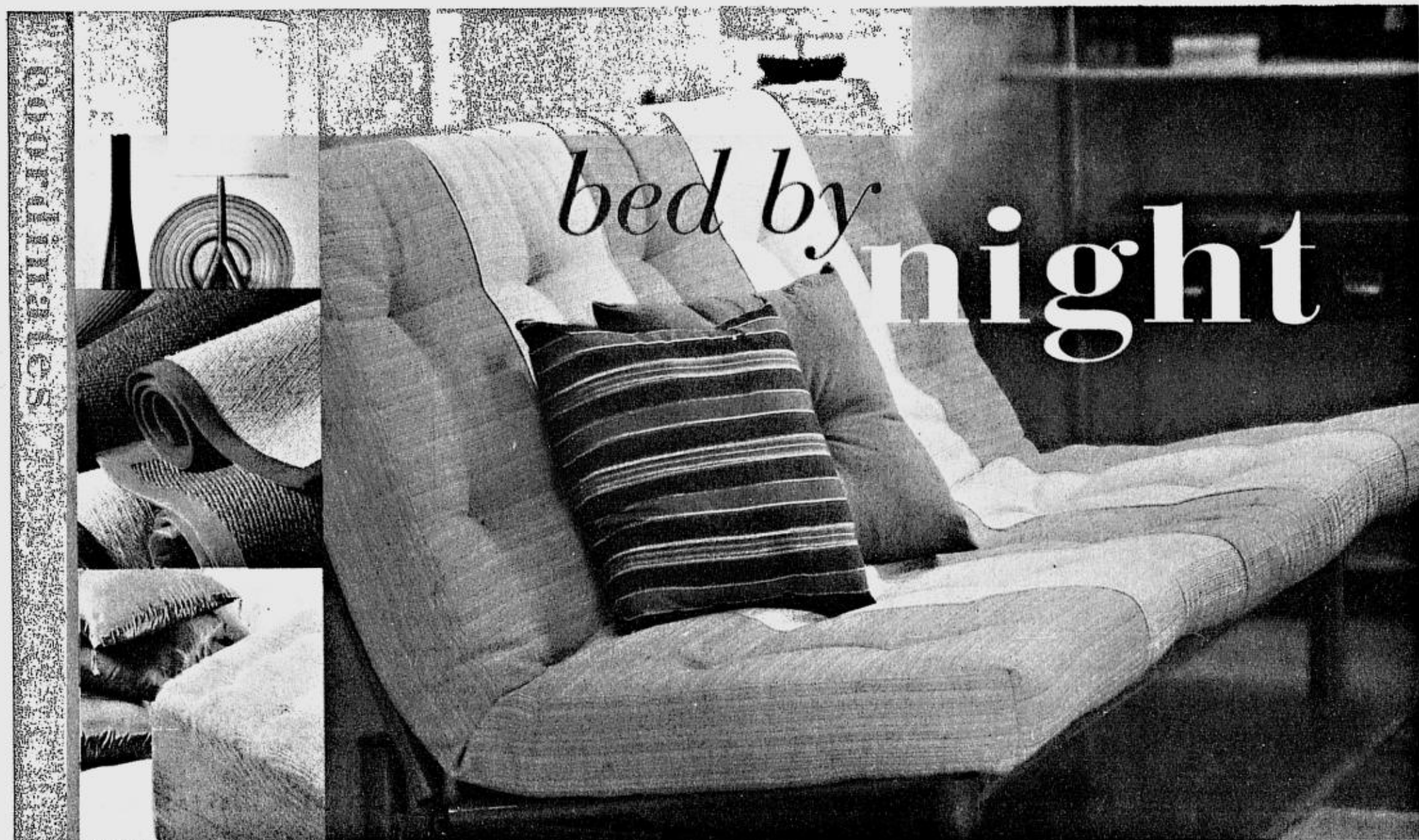
Loqueng also said Manapat had asked him to drive archives employee Remmel Talabis to Justice Carpio's office on Padre Faura Street in Manila to deliver an envelope on Jan. 5.

Talabis corroborated this, saying he

delivered a "sealed envelope."

It was also learned that Manapat had a meeting with Almonte on Jan. 13 as shown by a file retrieved from the computer of another archives employee, Vicelyn Tarin. This was confirmed by Manapat's secretary Ariene Ramos. Talabis and Tarin had testified against Manapat on Jan. 21.

In a statement, the First Gentleman's lawyer Jesus I. Santos said a connection between Arroyo and Manapat "simply did not exist and merely formed part of a... smear campaign which the Poe camp is resorting to instead of addressing the substantive issue of the candidate's citizenship."



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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Chicken sales down; farmers eye exports

THE PHILIPPINES may have so far escaped the bird flu sweeping through neighboring countries but its consumers are already shunning chicken, causing a slump in sales, an industry official said on Monday.

Ruben Pascual, head of an umbrella group of commercial chicken suppliers in the Philippines, said sales of live chicken had fallen 30 percent last week from the previous seven days.

Live chickens accounted for less than 20 percent of the total sales of the country's P74-billion poultry industry in 2003.

Poultry accounts for 14.4 percent of the 30 percent share taken up by agriculture in the country's gross domestic product.

Government officials alarmed by falling chicken sales have tried to assure the public that chicken products in the country are safe to eat.

"There is no reason to avoid a chicken meal," said Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima, who backed up his words by eating chicken in front of reporters yesterday.

San Miguel Foods Inc., a unit of San Miguel Corp., has a 35 to 40 percent share of the fresh chicken market, supplying fastfood chains and supermarkets in a nation of 82 million people.

Purisima said the disease could provide a window of opportunity for domestic bird growers, noting increasing inquiries from Japan, Brunei and Vietnam about importing chicken from the Philippines.

But industry officials believe it will take time for the country to become a major chicken exporter because production is too geared toward domestic consumption.

"It will take time for the country to prepare to export chicken," said Luis Lorenzo, the agriculture secretary. *Reuters*

4 Customs execs charged over chicken smuggle

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE BUREAU of Customs has filed criminal charges against four of its officials and three civilians for allegedly smuggling P50 million worth of frozen chicken legs into Batangas.

Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo filed a case of technical smuggling with the Department of Justice last Friday against officials Aginaldo C. Marquez, head of the assessment division at the Port of Batangas, customs appraiser Oscar T. Balicanta, and customs examiners Ligaya B. Platon and Luisa R. Castillo. The civilians charged were importer Ronaldo Laderas, his wife Raquel and broker Ivy Sarad.

Assistant Chief State Prosecutor Apolinario Exevea said the respondents face imprisonment of six years if convicted. The DOJ is preparing a preliminary investigation on the case.

The seven respondents were charged after 19 refrigerated, 40-footer container vans of chicken were smuggled into the Port of Batangas on Jan. 23. Declared to be "cases of general goods and polyester bags" the vans actually contained frozen chicken leg quarters.

PNB to keep \$41M of \$684-M Marcos loot

By Armand N. Nocum

FARMERS and human rights victims of martial rule could end up poorer by \$41 million as a result of an agreement between the government and the Philippine National Bank (PNB) involving the disposition of the \$684-million ill-gotten wealth of the Marcos family.

Based on the "deed of release with quit claim" entered into by the Philippine Commission on Good Government (PCGG) and the PNB, the bank will get about \$34.2 million in "contingent fund" for possible lawsuits.

Besides the contingent fund, about \$6.8 million, or one percent of the \$684 million, will go

Saycon, 5 'Kawal' men charged

By Leila B. Salaverria

FOR NOW, violation of the flag law and not sedition charges were filed by the National Bureau of Investigation against five junior military officers and two civilians implicated in the latest alleged destabilization plot against the government.

But within the military, three of the five officers have been charged with violating Articles of War 96 and 97—for conduct unbecoming an officer, and disorder and neglect to the prejudice of good order and military discipline, respectively—and could face a general court martial. Two of the officers were not charged as they turned state witness.

Charged by the NBI before the Department of Justice with defacing and casting dishonor on the

Philippine flag in violation of Republic Act 8491 were Army captains Peter Edwin Navarro, Rembert Baylosis, Philip Esmeralda, Marcos Serafica and Mohammad Yusof Hassan, as well as Council on Philippine Affairs secretary general Pastor "Boy" Saycon and lawyer Azoden Baltazar.

The charges were based on the officers' use of two Philippine flags sewn together and bearing the word "kawal" in yellow letters on the blue section. Kawal Pilipino was the name of their organization, the officers said.

The flag was displayed at the press conference called by the officers to reveal a supposed directive from President Macapagal-Arroyo ordering the military to keep tabs on her political rivals and to demand the resignation of Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermi-

ta for his involvement in Ms Macapagal's campaign.

But Mariano Panganiban, chief of the NBI's Special Task Force, said the agency has recommended the exclusion of Serafica and Hassan from the charges, as the two have turned state witness. Serafica had earlier said he had been duped by Navarro into attending the press conference and he did not know what the meeting was about.

In the NBI charge sheet, Saycon was identified as the one who urged the Kawal Pilipino members to accuse President Macapagal of ordering the military "to limit the actions of the other presidential candidates and destroy their chances of winning in the forthcoming national and local elections."

The charge sheet also said that

while Saycon admitted to arranging the press conference, he claimed there was nothing "insidious" about it nor were there any plans to bring down the government.

The three officers who are facing military charges—Navarro, Esmeralda and Baylosis—underwent initial pre-trial investigation at the Judge Advocate General's Office in Fort Bonifacio last Friday.

Their lawyer Ricardo Manicad has asked for a week's extension of the investigation to give them time to study the charges and prepare their counter-affidavits.

At the same time, Panganiban said that no sedition or conspiracy charges have been filed against the seven at the DOJ because the NBI had yet to gather enough evidence against them.

Part of the investigation would involve getting the statements of the reporters who covered the Kawal Pilipino press conference at the Ayala-Alabang home of Saycon.

Those to be questioned are GMA 7 broadcaster Arnold Clavio, Manny Mogato from the foreign press and Fe Zamora of Inq7.net, according to Panganiban.

Asked if the NBI would summon Sen. Loren Legarda and former military intelligence chief Brig. Gen. Victor Corpus to its probe, Panganiban said the NBI "was not at that stage yet."

Corpus had alleged that Legarda and Saycon had met several times before the Ayala-Alabang press conference took place.



MOURNING IN NORWAY

Relatives of the ill-fated freighter MV Rocknes' Filipino crew arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport late Sunday night. They attended the shipboard memorial service at the accident site in Norway.

ROGER MARGALLO

Tancangco, Lantion bow out of Comelec

By Martin P. Marfil

THE COMMISSION on Elections yesterday vowed to maintain its impartiality even as two of its commissioners, Luzviminda Tancangco and Ralph Lantion, retired from service yesterday, leaving two of seven seats vacant.

The retirees were among four commissioners appointed by deposed President Estrada. Their departure means the Comelec will soon have five appointees by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Although Malacanang has yet to announce replacements, a howl is already being raised regarding the impending appointments. Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos believes this

is part of a "conditioning" scheme by the opposition.

"They want to condition the minds of the people (in such a way) that if their candidate loses, they can blame the Comelec and say they were cheated. They should stop doing this," Abalos told the INQUIRER. "It's like a wedge being driven through us, this insinuation that once the replacements come in, the President could rule over us. It's very unfair."

Abalos was reacting to reports that opposition members were again criticizing the commission for the supposed delay in resolving the Fernando Poe Jr. disqualification case, saying the agency was waiting for the appointment of the two new commissioners

who would surely take the side of the administration.

This was equally unfair to the Estrada appointees, Abalos said, since it suggested that the election commissioners were always acting in favor of whoever appointed them.

He also assured the public that today's retirements would not have a serious effect on the work at hand. He explained that the Comelec was a policy-making body and that the "dirty work" was being done by senior officials and field men.

Abalos said Malacanang had not given any hint as to the forthcoming appointments, but that one of the names being floated was that of Comelec Executive Director

Mamasapunod Aguam.

He admitted that there was a rift between Tancangco and Commissioner Resurreccion Borra, who handled phase 2 of the modernization program, which was junked by the Supreme Court.

Apparently, Abalos said, Borra kept Tancangco in the dark regarding the computer program to be installed in the counting machines.

In an earlier interview, Tancangco said there was "no transparency" in the creation of the software, and warned of a "sleeping code" that could be activated and used in cheating without anyone noticing.

Abalos said it was all just a "misunderstanding."

NPO starts printing ballots for May polls

By Martin P. Marfil

THERE'S NO turning back.

The National Printing Office has started to print ballots for the May 10 elections.

Lawyer Rufus Rodriguez, a representative of the opposition, was at the government office in Quezon City to watch the procedures. He appeared satisfied with what he saw.

"There are watermarks by Comelec (Commission on Elections) and the printing office.

We are on our way. No more noel (No Elections) or postponement," Rodriguez, who is representative of the Kilusan ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, said.

Under the law, the lawyer explained, they are allowed to observe the process from the start of the printing process until it is shipped.

"We are here to assure the KNP that everything is in order and there will be no excess ballots printed," he added.

Rodriguez watched while

337,537 ballots for overseas voters were printed at the National Printing Office in Quezon City.

Officials of the printing office said that it took them four hours and 21 minutes to print more than 330,000 ballots which will be shipped to overseas posts.

The first batch of ballots would be used by seafarers on March 12.

Printing started weeks after the Supreme Court voided the Comelec's P1.3 billion automated

counting machine deal, a decision which is being appealed by the commission and the supplier.

If the Supreme Court decides in favor of automated counting, Elections Chief Benjamin Abalos yesterday said they can still implement selective automation.

"We are prepared for any and all eventualities. If the Supreme Court comes out with a decision on the 15th of this month, we can do selective automation," Abalos said.



LAWYERS ALL

James Gutierrez passed the New York Bar Exams recently. He is the youngest son of Supreme Court Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez and the late NBI Assistant Director Diego H. Gutierrez. With James are his mother, brother Francis, also a lawyer who graduated from the American University George Washington College of Law; his sister Aileen, a State Prosecutor; and her husband, Robert C. Marcon, a law practitioner.

NEWSBRIEFS

'Mangled' rights bill

MARTIAL law victims yesterday decried what they called the "mangled" outcome of the bills seeking to compensate victims with \$200 million out of the recovered \$684 million Marcos ill-gotten wealth.

The group Selda said Senate Bill 1877 and House Bill 4535 have been watered down to go against the victims' interest. "Selda wishes to have no association with this disgusting bill," Selda secretary general Marie Hilao-Enriquez yesterday told Sen. Joker Arroyo, author of SB 1877 in a letter. "The original bills were all right. But now they have been mangled," Enriquez said in an interview. Presidential Commission on Good Government chair Haydee Yorac however urged the bills' critics to slow down. "I would say a bill for the compensation of human rights victims no matter how defective is better than no law at all," she said. *Dona Z. Pazzibugan*

Guts to go vs Danding

FARMERS want a president who has "the guts to go against Danding." The militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas yesterday dared top presidential candidates to make public their stance on the recovery of the multi-billion coconut levy funds which, it said, had been stuck in businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco's hands for decades. Specifically, the KMP is eager to hear from Fernando Poe Jr., standard bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, and Raul Roco of the Alyansa ng Pag-asa. Poe, known as "The King of Philippine Movies," has done several television commercials for the Cojuangco-controlled San Miguel Corp. as chief endorser of San Miguel Beer, and Roco was a former associate in the ACCRA law firm, which represented Cojuangco in the initial coco levy cases in the late 1980s.

Last year, the Supreme Court ruled that the funds were public funds. In November, the KMP, together with the Bicol Coconut Planters Association and the Pinag-isang Lakas ng Magbubukid sa Quezon filed a "test case" of plunder against Cojuangco before the Ombudsman.

"After four presidents," KMP secretary general Danilo Ramos pointed out, "the coco levy funds remain under Cojuangco's control. We want somebody who has the guts to go against him."

Small coconut farmers have given up all hope of recovering the money under President Macapagal-Arroyo's government, according to Ramos. "Ms Macapagal's three years in Malacañang have been filled with deals and concessions with Cojuangco," he said. *Norman Bordadora*

UN protocol on migrants

THE Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday said the government is ready to implement the United Nations Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea, which became effective on Jan. 28. DFA Secretary Della Albert said the protocol would strengthen the international legal regime that protects migrants.

Under the protocol, governments agree to make migrant smuggling a criminal offense under national laws, adopt special measures to crack down on migrant smuggling by sea, boost international cooperation to prevent migrant smuggling, and seek out and prosecute offenders.

At the same time, it recognizes that illegal migration in itself is not a crime and that migrants are often victims who need protection. "With this protocol, the international community has been provided with an effective framework in fighting human smugglers, particularly the transnational organized crime groups and their highly sophisticated networks," Albert said. *Jerome Anling*

GMA allies bullish

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo should overtake Fernando Poe Jr. in the next round of surveys to break the supposed electoral invincibility of the popular movie actor. Poe was nine points ahead of Ms. Arroyo in the pre-election survey conducted by the Social Weather Station Inc., but congressmen allied to the administration said yesterday it could be easily eroded. "The voters are getting disaffected by FPJ's continuing silence on what he intends to do if ever he wins, while the people are increasingly appreciating what the President has been doing," said administration Rep. Prospero Pichay (Surigao del Sur). Pichay predicted that Ms. Macapagal would eat up the base of presidential aspirant Raul Roco, who for the first time was overtaken by President Macapagal in the SWS survey conducted mid-January. "The President's pacing in the popularity surveys is ideal and she is yet to peak," he said. The recent SWS survey showed Poe at the lead with 36 per cent, closely followed by Ms. Macapagal at 27 per cent and Roco at 19 percent. "The President can get, let's say, an additional nine points from the Roco base, while FPJ can slide down a few points," Pichay said. "This means GMA will emerge number one as early as March." *Carlito Pablo*

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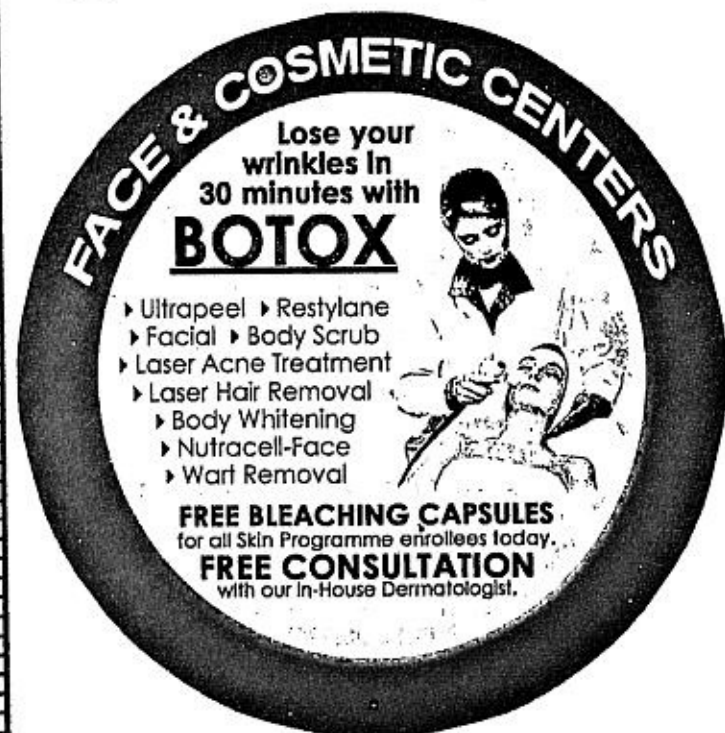
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PRESIDENT Macapagal checks the condition of Marilyn Espolong, a patient at the Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center. PCPO-MALACANANG

GMA allots P3B ...

From page A1

of our commitment to the universal health insurance coverage as mandated by Republic Act No. 7875, the enabling law of Philhealth," Duque said.

But the President herself fueled the suspicions when, escorted by Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, she gave out 100 Philhealth cards to new indigent members at the Jose R. Reyes Memorial Medical Center yesterday. The cards bore her picture.

She also did the rounds of the hospital, shaking hands with patients. At one point, she even tried to use a stethoscope.

Similar Philhealth cards were distributed to some 300 new enrollees in Cebu, Davao and Baguio. The cards would be eligible for use immediately, Philhealth officials said.

"The poor will have dignity now because they will no longer be service patients. They will be paying patients because of their cards," said Ofelia Alcantara, head of the Philhealth foreign assistance coordinating office, during the launch of the program.

National convention

Speaking before the first national convention of the Philippine Social Security Association, Ms Macapagal said the lack of universal health insurance needed to be addressed.

"The truth is hard to face about the lack of availability or access to health services, but now we are facing it squarely," Ms Macapagal said.

From the Philippine International Convention Center, where the assembly was held, the President then went to the Jose Reyes hospital.

Ms Macapagal, who is seeking a full term in May, said the best way of helping the poor through social security was to shore up the resources of all the social services agencies and to push investments and employment programs so that more employers can pay the health insurance premium.

She said that in the short period of her presidency, the majority of Filipino families had been placed under Philhealth coverage.

"Of course, this is just a down payment and the succeeding installment is we will try to make it universal," she said.

be the case. Health is every Filipino's aim," she said.

Universal coverage

The law mandates 100-percent coverage of health care services by 2010, but since the program took off only in 1997, the government has extended its deadline by two years.

The extension program announced yesterday seeks to include, through five million heads of family, a total of 25 million new enrollees.

Some 8.8 million indigents were enrolled in the Philhealth as of last year. The government has waived the payment of P1,200 as premium for poor members whose monthly family income is only at P10,000 to P12,000.

With the addition of 25 million indigent members, Philhealth projects on 87-percent coverage of the total population by year-end, up from about 55 percent.

Alcantara said indigent members admitted in hospitals retained by the Department of Health would not have to pay anything in excess of their Philhealth benefits.

An administrative order issued by Dayrit has effectively mandated all DOH hospitals to shoulder the cost of hospitalization in excess of what Philhealth could cover.

Ms Macapagal said the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office would provide half of the P3 billion needed to finance the program, and half would be taken from the national government specifically from the financial assistance fund for local government units.

"All members of Philhealth will be given either free or subsidized hospitalization, depending on how big the expenses would be, including the payment for the room, doctor and the cost of medicines, laboratory, X-ray and operation, if necessary," she explained.

Local complaints

Alcantara said funding for the program was supposedly a joint venture of the national and local governments, but local executives have constantly complained of lack of money for the project.

The local governments are expected to have a list of indigent families in their areas whom they would refer to the Philhealth for free membership. The distribution of slots per municipality or city depends on the poverty incidence in the place.

Indigents who may not be listed in their municipalities or cities can go to their barangays and enlist for Philhealth membership. The barangay officials will then refer them to the Department of Social Welfare and Development for a means test or an evaluation of their economic status.

The DSWD will furnish the local governments the names of poor families who are qualified for the program. The poorest in the roster will be selected first for Philhealth services, Alcantara said.

In her PICC speech, Ms Macapagal also announced that an "SSS Pensioners Day" will be held every last Friday of the month, initially at the SSS head office in Quezon City.

"The Pensioners' Day project provides free medical and social services to SSS pensioners. For now, it is once a month. It started last Friday and it will be held at the SSS head office every last Friday of the month and will soon be replicated in all other hubs of the system. If this is successful and patronized by our pensioners, we can hold it more frequently," she said.

"Why? Because many of our people are sick because they could not afford the cost of hospitalization. They could not be admitted to the hospitals because they could not pay the downpayment," she said.

She said one sick member meant a poor family would have to endure one day without food.

"We are forced to borrow from our neighbors to pay the hospital, medicines and doctor's fee. And when an operation is needed, some patients just go home because they don't have the money," she said.

"This should not

Asia's bird flu deaths rise to 12

From page A1

mental source. Neither human-to-human transmission nor direct contact with sick poultry can be ruled out, according to the WHO.

Health officials may never be able to confirm what happened, in part because the brother's remains already have been cremated.

"The situation is always going to have a question mark hanging over it," WHO spokesperson Bob Dietz said in Hanoi.

No other cases of people catching the virus from other people have been suspected anywhere else.

The death of the teenage boy came early Monday at Vietnam's Hospital for Tropical Diseases in Ho Chi Minh City, according to hospital deputy director Tran Tinh Hien. The youth was admitted last Thursday.

The death announced Monday in Thailand happened earlier, but health officials did not immediately say when. The unidentified 58-year-old woman from Suphanburi province was suspected to have suffered from bird flu, and that was confirmed with an autopsy, Public Health Minister Sudarat Keyuraphun said.

Bird flu has struck poultry in at least 10 Asian countries, but infections in people have been reported only in Thailand and Vietnam.

Spreading in China

China announced five new suspected cases in poultry on Monday, including one in its remote northwestern region of Xinjiang—underlining the potentially broad range of the disease. Xinjiang is more than 2,000 km from the southern region of Guangxi, where China's first case of bird flu was confirmed last week.

With the new report, China now has three confirmed cases and eight suspected cases in a total of 10 regions spanning the country.

The WHO on Saturday urged China to take swifter action against bird flu, warning that its chances to contain the disease may be dwindling. Beijing has closed poultry markets and processing factories in some bird flu-affected areas.

The FAO appealed for international aid for Asian farmers, saying they may otherwise resist slaughtering their flocks, a crucial measure in stamping out the disease and preventing human cases.

When the deaths of the two sisters were announced last Wednesday in Vietnam, the director of Vietnam's Institute of Clinical Research for Tropical Medicine said the women had helped their brother handle chickens at his wedding reception on Jan. 3.

However, the WHO said Monday that the sisters fell ill about a week after their brother died, which indicates the three did not get sick from the same exposure. The evidence suggests two different sources of infection, Dietz said.

Limited human-to-human transmission of the virus is not the real danger. What experts fear is the virus mutating into a form that passes easily between people—a pandemic strain that is a hybrid of the bird virus and a normal human influenza variety.

No new strain

There is no evidence that a new strain has emerged, WHO spokesperson Maria Cheng said. Results from tests comparing the genetic make-up of the virus found in the two Vietnamese sisters with that found in other people are expected from Hong Kong in several days, she said.

Bird flu spread between humans in a 1997 outbreak in Hong Kong that killed six people.

Then, the virus passed from infected people to health workers but soon lost its punch and failed to transmit further. Symptoms were very mild or nonexistent in those who caught it from patients rather than birds.

The six who died in 1997 all contracted the virus from chickens. All cases of human-to-human transmission recovered, raising doubts about whether the Vietnamese sisters caught the lethal strain from their brother.

Experts believe Hong Kong may have averted a global pandemic that year by slaughtering its entire chicken population in three days.

The WHO welcomed tests showing that bird flu has been in Asia since last April, saying the virus has not succeeded in infecting humans on a large scale despite having many more months of opportunity than originally believed.

The disease also is being battled in Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Pakistan, South Korea, Taiwan. However, the strain of bird flu striking Taiwan and Pakistan is different from the one hitting the other countries and is not considered a serious threat to humans. AP



WITH the bird flu crisis and as medical experts attempt to kill the virus, Ariel, a live chicken stall owner in Loakan Barangay, Baguio City does his regular routine preparing "pinikpikan," a ritual chicken stew dish and popular Cordillera delicacy.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

CRIMINAL LAW (Republic Act No. 6425, as amended)—Buy-bust operation—In a prosecution for illegal sale of dangerous drugs, what is material is proof that the accused peddled illicit drugs, coupled with the presentation in court of the corpus delicti. The testimonies of the buy-bust team established that an operation was legitimately and successfully carried out to entrap appellant. The positive identification of appellant by the poseur-buyer as the one who peddled the shabu unequivocally established the illicit sale as he is the best witness to the transaction. Moreover, his testimony was corroborated in every material detail by the other operatives who participated in the buy-bust operation. The court is not unaware that in drug-related cases, frame-up and "hulidap" are the common and standard line of defenses. In the case at bar, we find that the discrepancies cited by the appellant in support of his acquittal are immaterial and insufficient to reverse his conviction. It is settled that the exact date when the crime was committed need not be proved unless it is an essential element of the crime. Nonetheless, in this case, prosecution witnesses and anti-narcotics operatives narrated in detail the events leading to the arrest of the appellant pursuant to a legitimate buy-bust operation. The wrong date of arrest appearing in the Booking Sheet/Arrest Report was sufficiently clarified at the trial as it appears to be a mere clerical error committed by the person who typed the report and operated the computer. Lastly, there can be no doubt as to the date of the incident as even the defense theory of hulidap, as testified to by the appellant, his uncle and girlfriend, placed the incident on November 12, 1998. Neither is the exact description of the plastic bag containing the confiscated shabu indispensable for appellant's conviction. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Puno, Third Division, People vs Chua, G. R. No. 144312, September 3, 2003]

BY R. B. VERA

NPC divided into Poe, Macapagal factions

From page A1

The NPC has 62 members in the House of Representatives and at least 20 governors. It is second only in strength to the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats.

Teodoro conceded that the NPC was divided between supporters of Ms Macapagal and Poe. He emphasized, however, that the party remained united.

Local politics

Escudero noted that he was running for reelection as Sorsogon congressman under the NPC.

He explained that he decided to take a leave of absence as NPC spokesperson and executive committee member to "avoid conflict because the party has made no decision yet whom to officially support."

"I can't wait anymore," Escudero said.

Escudero said he had informed party leaders, including Cojuangco, who is the chair emeritus, about his decision to go on leave.

Teodoro gave no indication about which of the presidential candidates he was going to support.

Rep. Mark Cojuangco (Pangasinan), one of two Cojuangco sons in Congress, earlier said he was among the leaders of Pangasinan backing the President's election bid.

Rizal politics

For her part, Ms Macapagal has moved to secure vote-rich Rizal with her recent appointment of a scion of the Ynares clan as head of the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA).

Casimiro Ynares III, son of former Rizal Gov. Casimiro Ynares Sr. and current Gov. Rebecca Ynares, marked his first day in office yesterday. He was appointed on Friday.

The couple are close friends of deposed Presi-

dent Joseph Estrada. Ynares, in fact, is seeking reelection officially under the Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino, Estrada's party. His wife ran under the NPC in 2001.

Ynares confirmed that Ms Macapagal was courting his support.

"President GMA continues to court us. We talk to each other once a week.

It's normal. Other politicians like (Sen. Panfilo) Lacson, (former Education Secretary Raul) Roco and (Sen. Edgardo) Angara are courting me as well," Ynares said in a phone interview.

Rizal has around 730,000 registered voters, many of

whom rooted for Estrada in 1992 and 1998, when he ran and won as vice president and president, respectively.

Ynares said he had until March 25, the start of the local campaign period, to decide whether to support Ms Macapagal. "We are in the process

of consulting our political leaders about it," he said.

He said Ms Macapagal had "treated" them well, helping Rizal in its projects.

"Whoever we would

support in May, there would be a basis for it. And the people would know it," he said. With a report from Luigie del Puerto

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, February 3, 2004
4th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 2S 18:9-10, 14, 24-25, 30-19:3

Gospel: Mk 5:21-43

Jesus crossed to the other side of the lake and while he was still on the shore, a large crowd gathered around him. Jairus, an official of the synagogue, came up and seeing Jesus, threw himself at his feet and asked him earnestly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may get well and live."

Jesus went with him and many people followed, pressing from every side. Among the crowd was a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a lot at the hands of many doctors and had spent everything she had, but instead of getting better, she was worse. Since she had heard about Jesus, this woman came up behind him and touched his cloak thinking, "If I just touch his clothing, I shall get well." Her flow of blood dried up at once, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her complaint.

But Jesus was conscious that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" His disciples answered, "You see how the people are crowding around you. Why do you ask who touched you?" But he kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, aware of what had happened, came forward trembling and afraid. She knelt before him and told him the whole truth.

Then Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace and be free of this illness."

While Jesus was still speaking, some people arrived from the official's house to inform him, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Master any further?" But Jesus ignored what they said and told the official, "Do not fear, just believe." And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James and John, the brother of James.

When they arrived at the house, Jesus saw a great commotion with people weeping and wailing loudly. Jesus entered and said to them, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep."

They laughed at him. But Jesus sent them outside and went with the child's father and mother and his companions into the room where the child lay. Taking her by the hand, he said to her, "Talitha kumi!" which means: "Little girl, get up!"

The girl got up at once and began to walk around. (She was twelve years old.) The parents were astonished, greatly astonished. Jesus strictly ordered them not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

Commentary

Synagogue officials differ—or rather their circumstances differ. In Lk 13:14 we see an angry one: he is angry that Jesus healed an old lady on the Sabbath. But in today's reading we see one who "threw himself at Jesus' feet and asked him earnestly" to heal his little daughter who was dying. It would be great if we knew that it was the same official! There is nothing like a crisis to restore our humanity: not any kind of crisis but one of the heart. Any crisis that only challenges your mind is not deeply challenging; you are not really open till your heart is open. Your real inside is not your mind but your heart. Culture and travel and training can open your mind, but that isn't much. You are not open till your heart is exposed. As soon as the official had a sick child he ceased to be an official and became a father.

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Suicide attacks to unite Kurds, say leaders

IRBIL, Iraq—The twin suicide bombings that killed at least 56 people in the country's two main rival Kurdish parties allied to the United States will only serve to unite them and strengthen their resolve for self-rule within a federal Iraq, their leaders say.

The near simultaneous attacks on Sunday killed many of the top leaders of the two parties, who were gathered to greet hundreds of ordinary Kurds on the first day of the four-day Eid-al-Adha, or the Feast of Sacrifice, holiday. More than 235 people were in-

jured in the two party offices, 13 km apart in the heartland of Iraq's minority Kurds who have been the most supportive of the US invasion and occupation.

Also Sunday, a rocket attack on a US supply base in Balad north of the capital Baghdad killed one

soldier and injured 12 including two seriously. Another soldier was killed Sunday and two others hurt when their Humvee overturned near the town of Haditha. The deaths raised to 524 the number of US service members who have died since the Iraq conflict began in March.

One of them joined the Eid celebrations at the Kurdish Democratic Party, which controls Irbil province, and the other sauntered into the office of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, centered in the neighboring Sulaimaniyah province.

Guards said they did not search people because of the tradition of receiving guests during the holiday.

At about 10:45 a.m., the two bombers, standing amid a sea of well wishers waiting to shake hands with Kurdish leaders, deto-

nated the explosives.

Walls caved in, the ceiling came down in one of the offices, and shattered and broken bodies were flung in all directions. Pieces of flesh were stuck everywhere. A mangled head believed to be that of one bomber lay on the floor of the KDP office.

The KDP leadership took the heavier blow since it is based in Irbil, 320 km north of Baghdad. Among the dead were Irbil Gov. Akram Mintik, Deputy Gov. and KDP Deputy Prime Minister Sami

Abdul Rahman, his two sons as well as ministers in the Kurdish administration. The PUK's military commander also was killed.

Militias of both parties had fought alongside US soldiers during the invasion of Iraq last year, but also have been rivals for power in the Kurdish self-rule region since 1994 even though they participate in a regional government.

But the tragedy brought the two factions together, at least for the time being. AP

Bush orders intel failures investigated

WASHINGTON — President George W. Bush, under mounting political pressure, will sign an executive order to establish a full-blown investigation of US intelligence failures in Iraq, a senior White House official said.

The investigation will look at what the United States believed it knew before the war against Saddam Hussein's regime and what has been determined since the invasion. Former chief weapons inspector David Kay has concluded that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction, a chief rationale for the US-led war.

The investigation will examine not only Iraq but also intelligence issues dealing with stateless groups such as terrorists and secretive regimes such as North Korea, the official said Sunday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Given the broad mandate of the investigation, it is not likely to be completed before the November elections. Bush had resisted an investigation of Iraq intelligence but agreed to an inquiry amid growing pressure.

Lawmakers from both parties say America's credibility has been undermined by uncertainty over flawed intelligence that led the United States into war in Iraq. Republicans joined Democrats in calling for an investigation.

"I don't see there's any way around it," Sen. Chuck Hagel, a senior Republican member of the Senate foreign relations committee, said Sunday on CNN TV.

"We need to open this up in a very nonpartisan, outside commission, to see where we are," Hagel said. The issue is not just shortcomings of US intelligence, he said, but "the credibility of who we are around the world and the trust of our government and our leaders." AP



THOUSANDS of pilgrims aim their pebbles at stone pillars representing Satan in Mena, Saudi Arabia, where hundreds of Muslims were trampled to death during the climax of the annual hajj pilgrimage on Sunday.

REUTERS

Stoning rituals continue despite 244 deaths

MINA, Saudi Arabia—Waves of pilgrims were jostled or shoved their way through the crowds for devil-stoning rituals Monday, a day after 244 people were crushed to death during the same rites at the annual Muslim pilgrimage.

Ambulances were seen whisking away a few pilgrims overcome by the crush on Monday, but no further deaths were reported. Their conditions weren't known, but pilgrims sometimes faint from exhaustion or while trying to stay afoot in the crowd.

Most of those killed in Sunday's tragedy on the plains of Mina outside Islam's holy city of Mecca were Asians, with the biggest number of

dead identified thus far from Indonesia and Pakistan, the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

It was the worst tragedy in seven years at the annual Muslim pilgrimage, which is often marred by deadly fires, stampedes and riots.

Fifty-four Indonesians and 36 Pakistanis were among the dead, plus about a dozen citizens each from Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, India and Bangladesh, SPA reported. It said other pilgrims to die in the stampede were from China, Yemen, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and several African countries.

Two of the dead were Saudis, and 53 bodies remained unidentified, SPA said.

The crowd got out of control on Sunday as people moved along a wide ramp leading to the "stoning of the devil" ritual—where pilgrims throw pebbles at three stone pillars, symbolizing their contempt for the devil. Saudi authorities said that with pressure from behind, a few pilgrims fell down and panic set off a stampede.

Many Muslims who have performed the ritual have harrowing tales to tell about being swept away by the crowds, and being afraid to trip or fall for fear of being crushed to death. Pilgrims also were trampled to death on their way to the stoning ritual in 1994, 1998, 2001 and last year.

"All precautions were taken to prevent such an incident, but this is God's will," Saudi Hajj Minister Iyad Madani said Sunday. "Caution isn't stronger than fate."

Brig. Mansour al-Turki of the Saudi General Security Forces said about 10,000 security officers were on duty at the time in that area.

They intervened and contained the pushing in about 30 minutes, but already 244 people had been killed and a similar number injured, seven of them critically.

A pilgrim who was performing the hajj for a third time, Sami Ibrahim, said Sunday that the approach to the stoning was always "dangerously overcrowded." AP

4 militants die in Israel operation

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip—Israeli soldiers killed four Palestinian militants, including a one-armed leader of the militant Islamic Jihad group, in an intense gun battle in a Gaza refugee camp Monday, Palestinian witnesses and doctors said.

The Army said troops came under fire as they attempted to arrest the militia leader, Yasser Abu Ayish, at his home and returned fire. The army confirmed three gunmen had been killed, while one soldier was lightly injured.

Palestinian witnesses said four people were killed and the militant's house in the Rafah refugee camp was destroyed. Abu Ayish and his brother at one point ran out of ammunition, witnesses said. The Army said soldiers searching the building after the firefight found the militant leader's body inside the house.

Abu Ayish's legs and arm were blown off last year when a rocket he was building exploded prematurely. Abu Ayish, who was using a wheelchair, was the leader of the Islamic Jihad military wing in the Rafah area, and was mainly involved in building home-made rockets. He was high on Israel's wanted list.

The Israeli operation came a day after soldiers carried out a similar raid in the West Bank town of Jericho. One militant was killed.

David Baker, an official in Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office, described the raids as pre-emptive "search and arrest" operations. "We will not wait for these same terrorists to show up on our doorsteps," he said.

On Sunday, Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said that the heads of violent Islamic groups were targets for assassination.

Mofaz issued the threat in response to a declaration by the spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, that Hamas was making an all-out effort to kidnap Israeli soldiers. AP

Pakistan hero confesses to nuke transfers

ISLAMABAD—The founder of Pakistan's nuclear program, Abdul Qadeer Khan, has admitted he transferred nuclear technology to Iran, Libya and North Korea, a Pakistani government official said Monday.

Khan made the confession in a written statement submitted "a couple of days ago" to investigators probing allegations of nuclear proliferation by Pakistan, the official said on condition of anonymity.

The transfers were made during the late 1980s and in the early and mid 1990s, and were motivated by "personal greed and ambition," the official said.

The official said the transfers

were not authorized by the government.

A meeting of the National Command Authority that controls Pakistan's nuclear assets was briefed on the statement at a meeting on Saturday, when Khan—long regarded as a national hero in Pakistan—was sacked from his position as a scientific adviser to the prime minister.

Two senior military officials briefed a number of Pakistani journalists late Sunday about Khan's confession. Khan had previously been reported as denying any wrongdoing.

They told journalists that Khan admitted to selling outdated

"drawings and machinery" to the three countries to earn money for Pakistan. However, Khan claimed the transfers to Libya and Iran were also motivated by wanting to help other Muslim countries become nuclear powers, said two journalists who attended the briefing.

The government official said the two-month probe into the proliferation allegations had reached its conclusion, but said it was up to the authority to decide whether to prosecute Khan and six other suspects in the case.

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who heads the authority, is due to make an address to the nation about the progress of the investigation af-

ter the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice, which ends Thursday in Pakistan, officials said.

Pakistan began its investigation last November after revelations by Tehran to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog. Allegations of nuclear transfers to Libya and North Korea have also surfaced.

The government official said that "questions have been put" to two former Army chiefs, Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg and Gen. Jehangir Karamat, to check information provided by Khan and other suspects during the "debriefings"—as the government has referred to the questioning of scientists. AP

7 Columbia shuttle astronauts honored

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida—The United States held memorials on Sunday, with more due on Monday, for the seven Columbia shuttle astronauts who died a year ago when their ship disintegrated over Texas and Louisiana.

On Feb. 1, 2003, startling pictures of the shuttle falling like a shooting star dominated news broadcasts, shocking the country.

The country remembered the tragedy in somber ceremonies and during the US annual sports extravaganza, the 38th American football Super Bowl.

Here at Cape Canaveral's Space Mirror Memorial, around

100 people gathered in gloomy weather for a commemoration of the loss a year ago that nonetheless was forward looking.

"The disaster wasn't actually an end," said Kennedy Space Center director Jim Kennedy. "It was a beginning."

He spoke of efforts by NASA to rebuild its program in the wake of the tragedy which was also the subject of a lengthy independent inquiry. But the space program got a boost last month when President George W. Bush announced long-term plans for a new moon program and ensuing missions to Mars.

"Their loss will not be in vain,"

said Kennedy of the Columbia's crew: Rick Husband, Willie McCool, Michael Anderson, David Brown, Laurel Clark, Kalpana Chawla and Ilan Ramon, Israel's first astronaut.

"We will come back bigger, better and stronger than ever before, and I can assure you that the crew and beloved families will never, ever be forgotten."

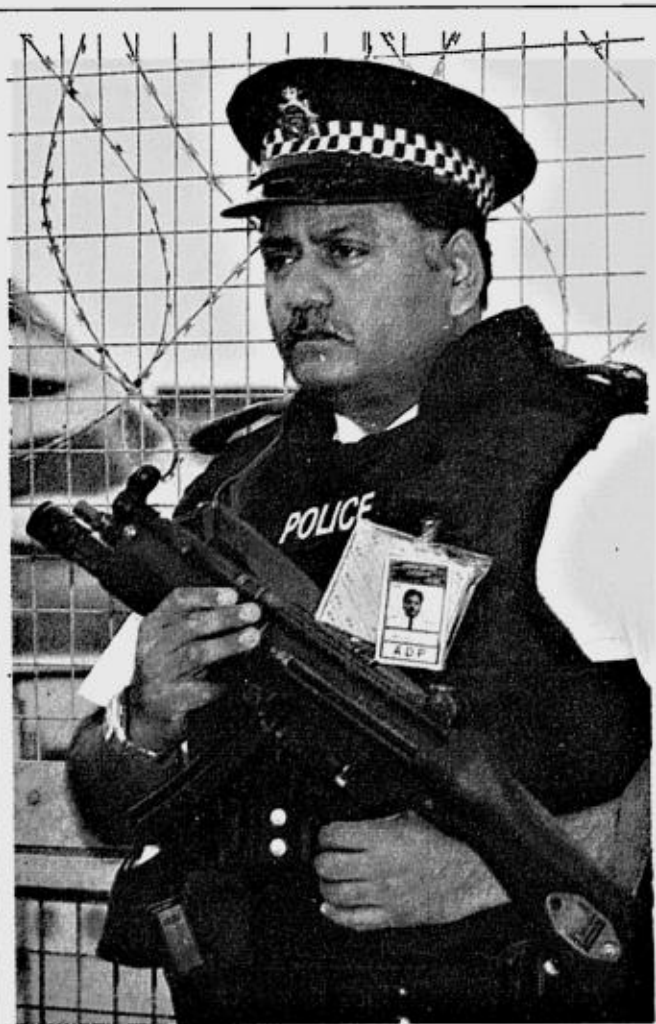
Kennedy and the Astronauts Memorial Foundation president, Stephen Feldman, placed a wreath of red, white and blue flowers in front of the black granite Space Mirror Memorial. Mourners threaded their own long-stemmed

roses through its railing.

Before Sunday's Super Bowl, CBS television was to show the rock group Aerosmith visiting Houston's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, earlier this week. The group was scheduled to perform a tribute song for the Columbia crew.

Astronauts of the next NASA space shuttle mission were to be recognized on the football field after another tribute song from pop star Josh Groban.

A performer dressed as an astronaut and wielding a US flag simulated the movements of man walking on the moon. AFP



TERRORIST THREAT

A police officer stands guard at London's Heathrow Airport following a terrorist threat that prompted the cancellation of British Airways flight to the Dulles International Airport outside Washington.

AP

Democratic rivals race through key states to sway undecided

ALBUQUERQUE, New Mexico—The Democratic presidential contenders are targeting key states and swing voters in the closing hours before the biggest campaign test of the season, with front-running John Kerry pledging "a real conversation with America."

Seven states and 269 pledged delegates are up for grabs in votes to be held Tuesday. To win the Democratic party's nomination in November's presidential election, a candidate needs to claim 2,162 delegates.

Kerry holds comfortable leads in polls in five of the states—Arizona, Delaware, Missouri, New Mexico, North Dakota—and is competitive in the other two—Oklahoma and South Carolina. His hope is a big win on Tuesday night that likely would narrow the field.

Howard Dean, the former front-runner, continued to pound Kerry for his financial ties with special interests, saying those links cast doubt on the Massachusetts senator's claim to be the champion of the battle against those interests.

"He misrepresented himself, grossly misrepresented himself, as a candidate who would take on special interests in Washington," the former Vermont governor said.

"My record responds to that," Kerry, a senator from Massachusetts, replied to reporters during a stop in Fargo, North Dakota, where he took in the Super Bowl before flying to New Mexico. "I have fought powerful special interests every step of the way."

Meanwhile, Kerry was continuing to pick up big-name endorsements, winning the backing of the United Farm Workers union and Washington Gov. Gary Locke. Aides said the union's backing would give Kerry crucial support among Hispanics who are a key constituency in New Mexico and Arizona.

Washington state holds caucuses on Saturday, and Kerry plans to head there and await returns on Tuesday night, shifting his focus to the next test.

Retired Gen. Wesley Clark focused on Oklahoma, where polls show he has the best shot at pulling off a badly needed win on Tuesday night. He was joined by Mike McClintic, who as a 22-year-old private pulled Clark out of gunfire and protected him during a Vietnam firefight. "Mike, you saved my life," Clark said, shaking his hand at an Oklahoma rally.

Kerry held a similar reunion with Jim Rassmann, a Special Forces officer Kerry rescued in Vietnam.

North Carolina Sen. John Edwards was focused on South Carolina, where polls gave him the best chance of scoring a victory. He dismissed suggestions he could join Kerry as a running mate.

"I think you should ask Senator Kerry whether he's interested in being vice president," said Edwards, his voice growing hoarse. "You can see I've been talking too much," he added.

Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman touted the endorsements of newspapers in Seattle and South Carolina. "What this says is I have na-

tional support," he said.

The seven states holding primaries or caucuses Tuesday together represent more than 12 percent of the 2,162 delegates needed to claim the Democratic nomination.

Kerry's focus Monday was on New Mexico

and Arizona, completing a one-week blitz of the seven states currently in play. Polls show him well ahead in both states, but surveys around the country detect a huge group of undecided voters, clearly large enough to sway the outcome. AP

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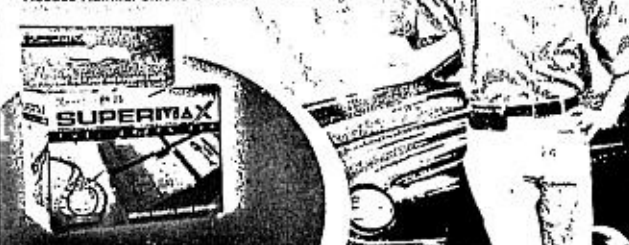
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WORLD BRIEFS

'Spirit' healthy again

LOS ANGELES—Nasa's Mars rover Spirit was up and running again on Sunday for the first time since it developed communications problems 10 days ago, and just a day after its twin Opportunity rolled onto martian soil on the other side of the planet. With Spirit declared "healthy" again, Nasa said it was the first time in history that two mobile robots were exploring the surface of another planet at the same time. Reuters

Crowd foils arrest

SEOUL—About 200 opposition party members blocked prosecutors and scores of riot police from arresting a political ally of former President Kim Dae-jung on corruption charges, a party official said. Prosecutors allege Hahn Hwa-kap, a lawmaker from the opposition Millennium Democratic Party, received 1 billion won (\$530,000) in illegal election funds in 2002 from firms such as SK Group, South Korea's third largest conglomerate. Backed by about 150 riot police, prosecutors tried several times to enter the party's headquarters in Seoul where Hahn had holed up Sunday, but were obstructed by about 200 MDP members blocking the entrance. AP

Guilty of snake mail

LITTLE ROCK, Ark.—An Arkansas lawyer and his son will soon be heading to prison after pleading guilty to mailing a threatening communication—a poisonous snake. Bob Sam Castleman, an attorney and former city judge in Pocahontas, Arkansas, and his son, Jerrod, were charged with mailing a cardboard box containing a venomous copperhead snake to a neighbor with whom they had feuded. The two pleaded guilty in federal court on Wednesday. The wife of the man to whom the poisonous package was addressed opened the box and saw the snake, about 28 inches long, slither out. Police soon arrived on the scene in Pocahontas, about 140 miles northeast of Little Rock, and shot the snake dead. The elder Castleman faces between 27 months and 33 months in prison, while his son faces a longer term of between 31 months to 44 months on the same charge because he had a previous conviction. A sentencing date has not been set. Reuters

'Hello Kitty' turns 30

TOKYO—Fans of Japan's ubiquitous "Hello Kitty" character can already buy anything from pop-up toasters to bicycles adorned with the winsome cat's face. Now 30 of the wealthier admirers of the popular puss have an opportunity to get their paws on something a little more exclusive. For just three million yen (\$28,400), they can buy a three cm high platinum Kitty, her dress and hair ribbon studded with 131 diamonds. Tokyo Jeweler Tanaka Kinkozoku Jewels is offering a limited edition of 30 of the platinum figurines from Monday to celebrate this year's 30th anniversary of the country's most famous cat. Reuters

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Journalistic truth

MORE than two thousand years ago, Pontius Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Up to now the question has not been satisfactorily answered.

The nature of truth was one of the topics discussed during the recent Media Nation summit at Clark in Pampanga. Journalistic truth is a very elusive concept. At the first instance, the "truth" as contained in news reports is filtered through the reporter's biases, prejudices, attitudes, cultural background, etc. At the second instance, it is filtered through the editors' biases, prejudices, attitudes, cultural background, etc.

Because of these "filters," a journalist cannot report the perfect, ideal "truth." Yes, perhaps he could if he were reporting a mathematical equation: $2+2=4$. But even certain scientific and mathematical "truths" are undergoing change.

For instance, we learned from Euclidean geometry that two parallel lines will never meet. But some physicists say that if two parallel lines are extended to the farthest reaches of the universe (assuming that the universe is finite), they will eventually meet because of the curvature of space. Some scientists said last year that we may be inhabiting a dodecahedral cosmos, something like a football, where space is curved upon itself.

Scientists can often prove their theories with physical evidence. But journalists can only try to give their audiences or readers an approximation of the truth. It would be best, of course, if they could present documentary proof to support the assertions in their stories. Some files, some records of some sort. (But now even these may not be 100 percent reliable and fool-proof, as shown recently by what happened at the National Archives.) Or journalists could get some reliable, credible news source to speak on the record.

In some instances, journalists can present several versions of the "truth," the way Kurosawa did in "Rashomon," a film about a bandit, a lady and her husband. He presented four versions of the "truth" and left it to the audience to decide which was the "real" truth.

In most stories involving conflict, such as political stories, journalists present both sides of a story or an issue, if there are two sides. They present all sides if there are more than two sides to a story or an issue.

Journalists can also give their readers and audience a better approximation of the truth by taking an in-depth, analytical and interpretive approach to the news. Very often, a news story has to be put in context to give the reader or the audience the complete picture. Sometimes, the omission of some details or the failure to include one or two facts can give the reader or audience a false picture of a news development.

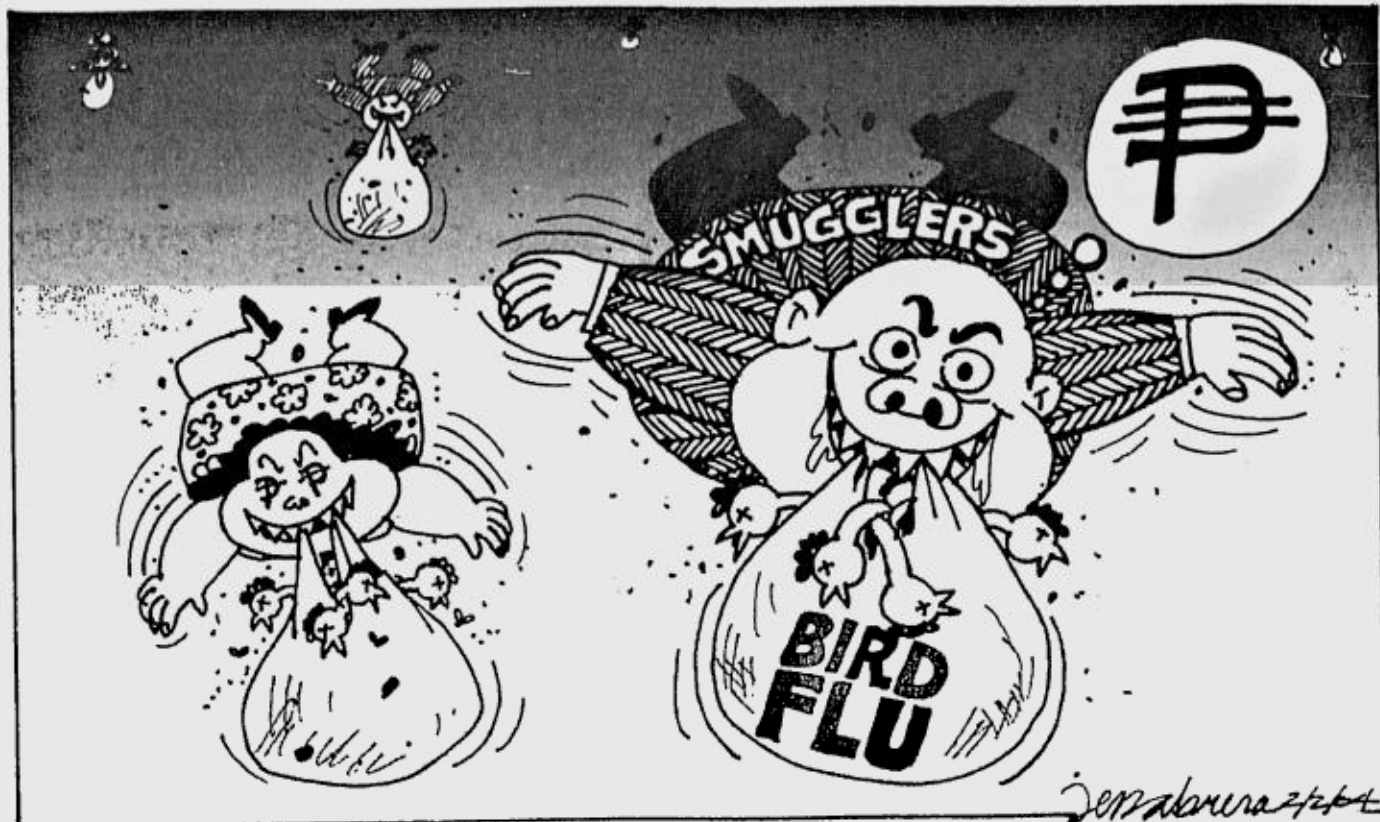
But to be able to report the news accurately, objectively and fairly, journalists have to have professional and ethical competence. A US journalists' institute some time ago came out with a pyramid of journalists' competencies. At the base of the pyramid are news judgment, narrative and language, analysis and interpretation and reporting skills. On the upper second tier are visual literacy, technological competence and numeracy. On the third tier are cultural and civic competence.

At the apex of the pyramid is ethical competence. Ethical competence is considered the most important competency of a journalist. This is because a journalist may be an excellent writer, a good reporter, a good investigator and he may have the best educational and cultural background, but without ethical competence, he is nothing.

The ethical journalist is clear in his guiding principles and strong in his values, committed to serve the public good, courageous in his beliefs and independent in his thinking.

An unethical journalist cannot be relied upon to always report the truth. Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in "The Elements of Journalism" said, "Journalism's first obligation is the truth." And Jack Fuller, president of the company that publishes the Chicago Tribune, said that "the central purpose of journalism is to tell the truth so that people will have the information that they need to be sovereign." Journalists always have to be reminded that they are in the business of reporting the truth.

It is well that the leaders of the print and electronic media who gathered at the Media Nation summit discussed the need to improve the professional and ethical competence of journalists. The media exercises a great influence on society, but this influence can be for good or for bad. To be able to wield its influence for good, the media has to constantly train and educate itself and occasionally pause from its hurried labors to engage in self-examination.



True or paranoia: Inside the mind of Erap

LAST weekend, a group of journalists was allowed to interview former President Estrada at Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal. Erap showed up in low-waist tan jeans and a jacket of the same color. He had a nice dark tan although he had put on weight.

Somebody commented that he had a healthy color. He used to be very pale.

"Naarawan na 'ko," Erap replied. "You're a little darker now," somebody said. "I hope not as dark as Boying Remulla," he joked.

Everybody looked at columnist Jonathan dela Cruz who blushed, but it was hardly noticeable. "Tumaba kayo," another journalist remarked. "Kasi, masarap kumain dito," he replied.

Erap still waddled like a duck when he walked because of his diseased knees and somebody asked when he would go abroad for his operation.

He said he had given up on his former American doctor because he was charging him an arm and a leg for his fee. He was charging \$1.2 million, whereas Stanford University Hospital in Palo Alto, California, where the doctor practices, wrote to say that a total knee replacement in its hospital will cost only \$600,000 maximum. So the doctor is charging him double. "Tinataaga ako."

Erap said he is talking with another surgeon, Dr. Christopher Jordan of Loma Linda Hospital, also in California, who is charging him only \$50,000, including professional fees.

Dr. Jordan found the \$1.2-million fee of the other doctor too steep. "If I charge you a million dollars," he reportedly told Erap, "I will be the richest bone surgeon in California."

But Erap still faces the problem of securing a US visa because of a new policy (adopted since the Shah of Iran was hospitalized at Stanford which created a domestic and international controversy) denying visas to former heads of state with pending cases in their home countries. Erap said his visa denial is still under appeal and that the Department of Foreign Affairs is pulling strings in the US State Department to get him a visa.

"Seems the administration really wants you

As I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz



out of the country," somebody joked.

If that fails, Erap said he will have his operation either in Singapore or Switzerland.

Asked about reports that President Macapagal-Arroyo may negotiate with Aksyon Demokratiko's Raul Roco for the latter to withdraw from the presidential race in her favor, Erap replied that that won't help her. They have the same vote, he added.

"How about FPJ and Ping Lacson? Won't Ping withdraw in favor of FPJ?"

Erap said the one-on-one meeting between the two opposition candidates may take place in March or April, if not sooner.

"Isn't that too late?"

"No. When Danding (Cojuangco) agreed to withdraw in my favor, it was also that late."

"Why did Danding agree to withdraw?"

"He had no organization then. That's the same problem now of Ping."

On the recent SWS survey, somebody commented that FPJ is not as popular now as Erap was at the same stage of his campaign. Erap replied that FPJ started very late. He said he, Erap, started campaigning even while he was still vice president, accepting speaking engagements right and left.

Asked about FPJ's flashes of temper, his *kumapare* said FPJ is still new in the political game. "We are opposites," Erap said. "I am outgoing, he is an introvert. For an actor, he is really shy. Even in the movies, he doesn't talk much, in and out of the screen."

Indeed, the two close friends are really opposites. For all the troubles he is facing, Erap is still cheerful, always cracking jokes. But FPJ has no sense of humor, can't even tell a joke nor smile often, though he can laugh

heartily at jokes told by others.

What can Erap advise his *pare*?

"Don't lose your temper. *Ang magalit, talo*. Absorb the brickbats. That's politics. Be prepared for criticisms. That's life.

"But he will learn. He is still new. Give him time. Ako, I had enough time. I was also touchy in the beginning. It is a big jump from being adored in the movies and then being constantly attacked in politics. But I learned when I was mayor, then senator, and then vice president. FPJ will also learn. Just give him a little time."

What about his citizenship?

"FPJ is more Filipino than those *kastilalays* in Makati," Erap laughed.

The mention of Makati touched off a raw nerve in the deposed President. He accused the Makati Business Club of conspiring to depose him.

Why would they do that?

"Because I didn't cave in to their wishes," Erap said. He said that after the Asian economic crisis and the peso exchange rate against the dollar shot up, the Ayalas and the Lopezes, the two water concessionaires for Metro Manila, asked him to increase the water rates because they were losing their shirts paying the dollar-denominated loans.

"I said those are your bids. It's barely five months and you already want an increase? What will the people say? Besides, the contract bans any increase for the first five years."

"After Lucio Tan won his tax case in the Court of Appeals, they wanted me not to appeal to the Supreme Court. But what will the people think? I said. They will think I let them down to favor a friend. I promised the people '*walang kama-ganak, walang kumapare*.' So we appealed even if Tan was my biggest contributor."

"As for Cardinal Sin, he wanted me to drop the population control program. But we will never get out of the poverty rut if we don't control the population explosion. So I turned him down."

"So they all ganged up on me—the Ayalas, the Lopezes, Lucio Tan, Cardinal Sin, the Supreme Court, GMA—and here I am, a prisoner?"

True, or just the rantings of a paranoid?

Postscript to a coup

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



BEFORE THE ISSUE just fades away, like old soldiers, is Kawal's charge believable?

I've heard people express incredulity, or at least skepticism, over it. Their objections include: One, is GMA too stupid to order the AFP to restrict the movements of the other candidates? And two, how may the AFP possibly do that?

Those objections are not unanswerable.

To begin with, the AFP has been used in the past for electioneering purposes, largely in providing financial and logistical support for the party in power. It's a major cash cow, its many discretionary funds providing milk to thirsty candidates particularly in their provincial sorties. It's also a major source of transportation and communication, and can be used to herd people to rallies. The transportation part is the most obvious. It has the biggest number of planes and helicopters, their use justified as official, such as GMA and her retinue handing aid or goods to storm- or drought-stricken villagers in far-flung places.

Ramon Mitra and Jose de Venecia enjoyed those privileges in 1992 and 1998. It didn't help, of course: they lost the elections. No, more than that, they were routed.

Their fate is an incentive for GMA to up the ante. She has reached the same pass as the other two. She is widely seen as a *trapo*, someone who wants to cling to power at all costs, a kiss of death in a presidential race. Indeed, she has surpassed Mitra's and De Venecia's levels of unpopularity. The public merely distrusted Mitra and De Venecia, it positively dislikes GMA. That is evident not just in the surveys but in the surprising levels of sympathy for the Oakwood mutiny from the public, quite apart from the AFP. That is the reason she hasn't been able to jail its authors.

GMA's record moreover shows she is not loath to be reckless, or take huge gambles. She upped the ante on the war against terror, enlarging the scope of the war in Mindanao by lumping the MILF among the enemy. Indeed, if the Oakwood mutineers are to be believed, by engineering, along with Angelo Reyes, the

bombings of several places to justify it. And you can't have any bigger gamble than that she vowed on the grave of Jose Rizal not to run, and ran anyway. These are levels of risk—or desperation—that do not preclude ordering trusted generals to make life hell for the other candidates.

Can her generals do that if they wanted to? Yes.

Even in its most literal sense, it is perfectly possible for them to restrict the movements of the other candidates in areas presumed to be ravaged by insurgency or secession. The first includes many parts of Luzon and the second Muslim Mindanao. The scope could be easily expanded. The candidates could be prevented from going to these places on grounds of threats to their wellbeing. They have no way of verifying it. Since GMA embraced George W. Bush's favorite war, the estimation of threats has rested solely on the AFP Partisan soldiers, or assets, or mercenaries, could even be inveigled to sabotage the rallies of the other candidates, the blame being put on rebels and terrorists. Beyond the literal sense, GMA's party stands to enjoy unprecedented logistical support.

Here, we come to the crux of the matter, the one thing that makes all this believable. That is that Eduardo Ermita, the defense chief, is also GMA's campaign strategist. Ermita, of course, has scoffed at Kawal's charge, but his position subverts his protestations. You cannot have a bigger anomaly than that the defense secretary is also the political strategist of the incumbent. It compromises the AFP and prevents it from being a neutral enforcer of ground rules. It puts the entire organization at the disposal of Lakas, or specifically GMA. And with GMA be-

ing a very lame duck, it makes employing it for dirty tricks a most attractive, if not irresistible, prospect.

The arrest of the six Kawal officials clinches the argument. Ermita and Narciso Abaya, the AFP chief, say they are guilty of fomenting a coup or mutiny similar to Oakwood. And with Copa behind them, Boy Saycon having at the head of it.

What coup? Boy Saycon may say and do many things, but he is a threat only to himself. There are no troop movements, there are no shadowy gatherings, there are—most importantly—no rumors of a coup or mutiny. The last is this country's biggest contribution to the art of the coup, what I would call the "Cassandra coup," a coup that is advertised well beforehand but which nobody seems able to stop.

Why on earth would Copa, the presumed mastermind of the destabilization plot, want to remove GMA for forcible means? The legal one is readily available—elections. Any one of GMA's rivals stands to win over her, and Copa's boss, Peping Cojuangco, has expressed a preference for FPJ, currently the strongest bet. If any military or civilian group wanted to oust GMA, it would have done it last year, not today. Not in the thick of the country's favorite pastime when it has no chance to succeed, or gain public support if it did. The junior officers may be deluded, as Ermita and Abaya charge, but they are not that deluded.

There is only one way to dispel Kawal's perfectly believable charge that GMA means to use the AFP to cheat, and cheat massively. That is for Ermita to resign either as defense secretary or as GMA's campaign strategist. He cannot be both at the same time. And to order the officers and men of the AFP loudly enough for the world to hear, under the severest sanctions if it is not obeyed, to desist from taking sides in the elections. The AFP like the Comelec, may not taint the elections with partisanship.

Ermita doesn't do that and GMA "wins," he will be the boy who cried wolf. No one will believe him when the wolf does come.

Major league players

POLITICAL
TIDBITSBelinda
Olivares-Cunanan

Both sides have strong arguments, but it behooves them to seriously reduce the budget to avert a deficit that could balloon to over P230 billion this year. *Dapat pag-usapan ng masinsinan* with a lot of earnestness and sincerity, and they have only until Feb. 6, when Congress adjourns.

Two months ago, when Fernando Poe Jr. threw his hat into the political ring as opposition standard-bearer, I opined that things would polarize and some candidates would be marginalized. Over the weeks, as the Macapagal administration went all out with GMA's achievements, such as the raids on drug factories, the capture of notorious kidnappers, and various poverty alleviation programs, her ratings improved. The coup de grace was the recruitment of Sen. Noli de Castro as GMA's runningmate; the fallout benefitted both FPJ and GMA, causing them to surge forward, leaving behind Raul Roco at a respectable 19 percent (but no longer moving from there), and Panfilo Lacson at the bottom. Analysts point out that what hurt Roco badly was his failure to recruit a big name for a runningmate and to fill the 12 slots of his senatorial lineup, which is composed mainly of has-beens. When Roco recruited Hermie Aquino, I wrote that pundits would question just how serious his campaign is. Suggestions are now coming from various quarters for him to consider stepping down in GMA's favor, so that she could beat FPJ.

Actually, perhaps THE factor that would polar-

ize opposing camps and separate contenders deemed "serious" from the "non-serious" is funding. Analyst Tony Gatmaitan, who has been looking at the logistic aspect of political campaigns for years now, opined in a recent forum at the Standard Chartered Bank in Makati that a presidential candidate needs something like P4.2 billion, "but this is for starters only." TonyGat broke this up into P2.39 billion for "total subsidies" that a presidential candidate has to provide to the candidates in his ticket, from the 12 senatorials, 200 representatives, 80 governors and 80 vice governors, 17 city mayors and 17 vice mayors, 204 city councilors, 1,500 town mayors, an equal number of vice mayors and 12,000 councilors.

He cited contributions like P10 million per senatorial candidate, P5 million per governor, P500,000 per vice governor, P150,000 per town mayor and P70,000 per vice mayor, etc. In addition, the presidential candidate's camp has to provide P1.92 billion to fund three watchers to man each of the 114,000 precincts across the nation over a 10 day period at P300 each per day.

The ballpark figure of P4.2 billion, however, does not include expenditures such as the P400 million in TV spots, which is the upper limit set by the Comelec, about P200 million to spend for rallies around the country, and many others. Moreover, he stressed, it does not include the funds that have to be set aside for buying votes, say, in Mindanao, or accommodations within the Comelec.

TonyGat opined that there are only eight Chinese Filipinos and three Filipinos who belong to the major contributors' league, and that there's a 10 percent donation upon filing of candidacy, with the 90 percent given three weeks before the elections usually to the top three candidates only. His figures may be a bit exaggerated, but political veterans opine that the truth is not that far. But even if these figures were to be cut into half, it's still obvious that the presidential game is only for the major league players.

Kindergarten ethics

"SSSHHHH. Quiet, everyone or else the giant in the second floor will come down and eat the bad boys and girls."

Thus began the teacher's giant tale. Mel stopped crying. Kitty's eyes grew big. April and Sheila became silent. A dropping pin would have been heard inside our classroom. All of us, little children, were taking the warning seriously.

"Innocence" is too technical a word to apply to 5-year-old kids in kindergarten.

At least I was contented with knowing I was not stupid and I was hoping that the rest of the class weren't, too.

The giant tale was not true. My dad had told me that a year before I enrolled in kindergarten. I knew how the story ended: the giant was killed when he fell from the beanstalk.

Still, every time the teacher would ask us to do something in class and some of us did not obey, she would trot out the tale about the giant. This went on for weeks and months until one day I fought for the truth I had kept to myself.

"Children fall in line and keep quiet or else the giant..."

Everyone fell in line, except me. Sid, half-frightened, was vigorously signaling me to follow. I ignored. He came over and whispered: "Fall in line or the teacher will feed you to the giant."

I told him boldly: "There is no giant."

"You don't believe in the giant?"

"No."

Off he went, the squealer, to spill the beans. "Teacher, Eugene says there is no giant."

In an instant the teacher was bending over me and grabbing my arm. "Is it true you do not believe that there is a giant?"

With a wry smile, I told her that I didn't. I felt awkward confronting an adult for the very first time in my young life. My heart was beating much faster than usual. I was a little bit afraid. It was not the truth that brought some fear but the consequence. But there it was. What has been said is said. What I told Sid and what I admitted to the teacher were the truth. Either I was right or I would be the giant's early lunch.

Before long, the teacher was dragging me and we were on our way up to the second floor. She took the first couple of steps with an admirable display of apprehension and fear. My teacher was a very good actress.

If you can't beat them, join them! So there I was, pretending to be afraid, too. But as we took the third, the fourth and the fifth steps, I noticed that my fear was growing more real. And not because I expected to be confronted by the giant. I was afraid that if the teacher was bent on making fun of my classmates who were waiting in fear downstairs, she could easily hurl me down the stairs, instantly transforming me into a gingerbread boy flattened like a big pancake.

My mom taught me never to say bad words, especially that horrible "f word." But just this once, allow me to use it so I can give a clear and precise description of my teacher: Fat. (Sorry, Mom, I won't say it again. Promise.)

As we reached the second floor, the teacher carefully opened the door just enough for her to peep inside.

"There he is!" she explained.

I stole a glance myself, hoping to see him. Then I looked up at my teacher and gave her a giant smile of triumph.

In that instance, the teacher must have realized that I had proven what I set out to prove. But she never gave up. She closed the door with a bang, grabbed my arm and rushed downstairs, obviously trying to impress everyone that, thanks to her, I was still alive. It must be really tough raising up this kindergarten teacher.

She came down, acting like a heroine who had saved a poor little boy. I felt like Moses going down Mt. Sinai. There was the crowd, falling in line, fearful, quiet, some thankful that I was still alive. Sure they did not have the golden calf, but neither did they have the truth to make them truly obey.

As the teacher let go of me, I rushed to fall in line. I began to wonder:

Was the tale of the giant true because the teacher told it? Or was the teacher telling it because it was true? Or was it neither of the two?

If I already knew what was true, then why call it a submit to a tyranny. (Wimp as it was, I would still call it tyranny.) Where had democracy gone? If I was convinced that the giant died when he fell from the beanstalk, why did I have to obey commands based on a lie?

The situation struck me as quite ironic. Mom and Dad were working hard to send me to the "best" kindergarten in town so that my hunger for truth would be filled on a banquet of ABCs and 123s, only to find out that the appetizer would be a grisly tale.

I could not ask for a refund. Neither did it occur to me to sue the school head for allowing a tall tale to be told by the teacher. All I wished for was that grown-ups would realize that kindergarten folks were old enough to understand and distinguish truth from fairy tales.

I suppose truth teaches more effectively than tales and threats. While fears vanish, faith grows. We are capable of obeying without being told the story about a giant who eats bad children.

Seeing the dusty enormous rag doll did not change my views about obedience. When the teacher asked us to keep quiet, I zipped my big mouth shut, because I knew it was her turn to talk and my job was to listen.

I should act with respect toward others if I wanted to be respected too. That was what Papa and Mama told me the last time I played in their room with Ate and Ging-ging. We were free to do things, but our every action was like twin popsies: there had to be a stick grown-ups called "freedom" and another stick called "responsibility."

Kindergarten was a lot more fun than I expected it to be. But there was a lesson more important than knowing how to recite my first ABCs and write my first 123s or dance. I learned that I was not the owner of my twin popsies and beyond this, the capacity of breaking it and sharing it with a friend, without resorting to threats. I was free to do that. The poem said it clearly: "I am the captain of my ship, I am the master of my soul."

What I don't understand up to now is the reason grown-ups do not understand those "sticks" in their twin popsies. Maybe it's because they still believe in giants.

Even then I told myself that I would write something to make people know that I learned about freedom and responsibility when I was in kindergarten. Maybe I would do it as soon as I reached first grade.

Eugene Dominic I. Hechanova, 24, is a seminarian at the Faculty of Theology, University of Navarre, Pamplona, Spain.

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VAWC is a development problem, too

BEFORE THE WEEK is over, let's hope both the House of Representatives and the Senate ratify the bicameral committee report on the "Violence Against Women and Children" Act, then send it to Malacañang for signing into law.

Once signed, the law will not only identify domestic violence as a distinct crime, but also impose harsher penalties on abusive spouses, partners, boy/girlfriends, parents and other members of the family. It also provides greater protection under the law to those vulnerable to abuse within the family setting or in an intimate relationship, while providing for services for counseling and healing.

In a previous column, I identified the legislators who took active part in drafting various versions of the Act and guiding their passage through the House and Senate. Unfortunately, there were some names I missed. Rep. Josefina Josen of Nueva Ecija, chair of the House Committee on Women, also headed the House Panel in the Bicameral Conference Committee and proved to be quite diligent in promoting pro-women legislation in the 12th Congress. Also, if I'm not mistaken, Senators Francis Pangilinan, Loren Legarda, Tessie Aquino-Oreta and Rodolfo Biazon authored different bills that eventually made their way to the VAWC Act.

Abansel Pinay party-list Rep. Patricia Sarenas has also asked me to acknowledge the women who helped draft the Domestic Violence bill which she authored in the 11th Congress and contained much of the provisions in the VAWC Act. They are: lawyers Katrina Legarda, Lorna Kapunan, Gettie Sandoval, Arlene Carbon and Alice Morada, as well as NCRFW Chair Oyie de Dios and Anna Leah Sarabia of Kalakasan.

ASIDE from providing relief to battered spouses, partners and family members, is there any other reason for the public to welcome the passage and full implementation of the VAWC Law?

Sarabia, whose Kalakasan Foundation provides hotline counseling and referral as well as other services to abused women and children, says that on the average, a survivor of domestic violence would need to spend P6,000 a month on hospital-

AT LARGE



Rina Jimenez-David

ization, counseling, legal costs, temporary shelter and rehabilitation. If a woman or her family cannot afford the expense, much of it will need to be shouldered by local government and government agencies, or by NGOs like Kalakasan.

If, as a recent Social Weather Stations survey indicates, there are an estimated 2.16 million women and children who are abused every month in this country, this would mean that a whopping P12 billion a month are actually spent on domestic violence cases. "More than the budget of the Department of Health and the Department of Social Welfare and Development combined!" Sarabia notes.

So there is more than just compassion or feminist sympathy involved in the effort to provide for legal relief and a comprehensive government response to the problem of domestic violence. The VAWC Act also responds to a very real and urgent development problem, empowering millions of women to take a more active role in society, while creating safer homes and less violent families.

DURING a recent CEO Forum on the "Business Response to Tuberculosis in the Workplace and the Community," both Tom Siebert, president of American Standard of Phils., and the representative of the Department of Labor opened their talks with an account of a highly personal encounter with TB.

Both Siebert and the Labor official said their eyes were opened to how widespread TB is in the country when their personal drivers were diagnosed with active TB. Both the executive and the bureaucrat were suddenly confronted with TB hitting "home." The

DOLE official confessed to feelings of panic initially "since I was traveling with my driver about four hours every day in a confined space, breathing the same air" for about a year. He immediately had himself tested (by having an X-ray taken, which meant even he didn't know enough to follow true DOTs protocol), and it was only after he was assured that he tested negative and that his driver had begun TB treatment and was no longer infectious did he confidently board a car driven by the driver again.

This reaction is quite typical, especially of people who think TB is no longer a concern of theirs. But the reality is that as long as one is living in the Philippines, or in many developing countries, for that matter, TB is never more than one or two "degrees of separation" away.

We may take steps to ensure that our homes will be TB-free, mainly by subjecting our house help and family members to tests. But unless we're prepared to live like hermits and move around in an impenetrable bubble, we're likely to encounter other people with TB—teachers, sales clerks, police, co-workers, our children's schoolmates, and yes, drivers.

AS MATERIALS prepared by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) and Philippine Tuberculosis Initiatives for the Private Sector (PHITIPS) point out, "anybody can be infected with TB."

At any time, it's estimated that more than 50 percent of Filipinos would be infected with TB, and if undiagnosed and untreated, the disease can infect from 10 to 15 persons within a year. Of those infected, one can develop into a case of active TB.

Previously, the common response of employers to TB was stringent screening and dismissal of any employee detected with TB. But such a policy, it's been pointed out, can only result in weakened productivity and the loss of talented employees and job applicants who might otherwise benefit from proper diagnosis and treatment. A TB in the workplace program can yield results in both immediate and long-term benefits, and far exceed the program's start-up costs.

About Bicol (1)

SENSE AND
SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper



quarrels or bloody wars between tribes.

The ancient social structure of the Bicolanos consisted of three divisions: *dato*, *dulujan* and *oripon*. The *dato* was the chief, the *dulujan* a day laborer and the *oripon* was the slave, acquired in war or bought or enslaved by debts. Among the *dulujans* were the ministers of the religion called *Asog*.

The *Asog* were effeminate men who wore necklaces and earrings. For cult functions, they would don feminine clothes and act like women, including the manner of speaking. They would also at times entertain people with their jokes and witty remarks, causing much hilarity. It was the custom among them not to marry in order to be free to carry out their ministry when called or possibly because they had no inclination to do so. Circumcision was known and practiced.

There were also women priests called *baliana* who officiated at sacrifices. These were generally the most astute women, loquacious, cunning, always fluent and possessed of a sagacious manner. It was their livelihood to listen to the cares of others, intercede for them and invoke the *Anitos* or ancestral spirits, for which they received generous presents. They lived among the people, serving as their consultant on all matters of importance especially those related to illness and sufferings. The *baliana* certainly gave the early Catholic ministers a lot of work. The priests had to employ strong and powerful measures to convince the people of what they considered were

the deceitful ways of the *baliana*.

None of these early songs, like the *Soraque*, had been preserved, as far as Retana could ascertain. One can deduce from the friar chronicles that there were many and that the natives were gifted poets, experts in speaking and writing in verse since this was one of the means utilized by the same missionaries to achieve their fast and rapid conversion, putting in verse the principal mysteries of our religion. Their toasts called *abatayo* during their feasts were famous for their sharp, short and sparkling wit.

Even in the 19th century, there was no lack of poets during fiestas who could improvise with much grace and could, with their jokes, entertain the audience for long hours and even whole nights. It was also known that in the olden days, there were itinerant poets resembling European troubadours, who traveled along the regions with their *codyapi*, relating the battles and wars of the towns, the deeds of some new hero and even phenomena of seismic or geologic nature such as a strong earthquake, the explosion of a volcano or some devastating and imposing typhoon.

The *codyapi* was a kind of guitar that was in popular use. It was made of cane and had five abaca strings. The talent and disposition of the Filipinos for poetry was great, and it is to be regretted that due to the transitory nature of the material used for writing (such as cane and palm leaves), none of the olden poetry was saved.

Retana had heard of a blind man in Ligao who was honored with the distinctive name of "Homer of Ibalon." The man was an author dedicated to singing of the terrible and horrible explosion of Mayon Volcano on Feb. 1, 1814. It was a poem worthy to be read for the sweetness of its expressions and the nobility of the sentiments expressed.

(W.E. Retana, *Archivo del Bibliofilo Filipino*, 1895.)

WE are told that the external manifestation of religion is the practice of rites, and pre-Hispanic Bicolanos employed quite a few of them. The early Bicolanos had a special rite for the *Gugurang*, one of their gods, that they called *Atang* (sacrifice). The *Atang* was offered as an act of thanksgiving for a favor received. It consisted basically of singing, eating, dancing and drinking many times to excess.

The site that they used for their offerings was the *gulang-gulangan*, a kind of spacious and wide shed made of bamboo and palm leaves that lasted only as long as the act that motivated its construction or until a strong wind came and destroyed it totally.

There were no idols representing the *Gugurang*, or any that had been found at the time Retana wrote his observations in the *Archivo del Bibliofilo Filipino*. Bicolanos did have some statues that they called *lagdong*, representing ancestors. Among the *Agtas* there were images, made of wood or carved in relief, representing the male figure.

The rites were of various types according to whether they were directed toward the *Gugurang*, the *Asuang* or the *Anito*. The *Atang* was the most sublime of the rites asking the *Gugurang* for a good harvest or giving thanks for favors received. The rite consisted in offering the best of the fruits of the soil called *himolooan* which was consumed after the offering in noisy festivities.

The steps of the celebration were as follows: A table of bamboo called *salagnat* and only used on these occasions was prepared. Dozens of viands of all kinds were placed on top of it and after the *baliana* recited secret supplications, intoned the *Soraque*, a religious song dedicated to the benevolent *Gugurang* was sung in chorus by women invited for that purpose. Once the song was over, the various viands were distributed and these were eaten merrily as the finale to the festivities. But sometimes this rite would terminate in fights,

What ails the broadcast media?

I WISH to congratulate Mr. Nestor U. Torre for writing "Beyond Willie Revillame" (PDI, 1/13/04). First, I thank God that Revillame is hopefully banished forever from noontime shows, if not from the entertainment world altogether. Secondly, I'm happy that the management of ABS-CBN finally found the guts to ax him. However, what about his other co-hosts like Randy Santiago, Bayani Agbayani and the rest of MTB's insensitive crew? Will ABS-CBN continue to inflict these incorrigible individuals on our young people?

Regarding the "Kapuso" Station (Channel 7), I would like to ask this question: How long will you tolerate the gender insensitive acts of Eat Bulaga's Joey de Leon

and Vic Sotto? Over the years, I've followed up the shows of these two people and as far as I know, the only contribution they've made to the entertainment world is to peddle dirty jokes and insult the sensitivity of the audience and their female guests, in particular.

Mr. Torre is correct: "Revillame is only a symptom of a more general malaise that has stricken some other local TV people...that has led to the lowering of program standards, the 'tabloidization' of local television, and the deplorable use of late night, adult TV garbage on the daytime, 'GP' time slot." Who's to blame for all these? The greedy radio and TV stations; the inutile Kapisanan ng mga Broadcasters sa Pilipinas; and last but



not the least, the Filipino audience itself that continues to patronize the idiotic and sometimes lascivious shows like Magandang Tanghali Bayan and Eat Bulaga.

—CARLOS D. ISLES, 14 Platinum St., Fillinvest 2, Batasan Hills, Quezon City

Leading the country different from heading a firm

I BEG to disagree with Eriberto M. Suson (PDI, 1/13/04) who said that the position of the president of the Republic of the Philippines "is just like the position of a manager or president of a typical business organization."

In a business corporation, authority flows from the top, while in government, authority emanates from the people through the mandate of an election. The power of the manager or corporation president is acquired through performance and merit, while the president of our government receives his power through popular vote. In business corporations, those at the top must be the best although not the most popular. In government, the president may not be necessarily the best, not even academically equipped, but he must be the most popular (which is Philippine politics today).

The manager or president of a business corporation issues an order, which goes down the line for compliance. Anyone who doesn't follow risks his job.

The president of the Philippines may issue an order, which the Senate and the Lower House will dissect and argue till their members turn blue. If discussions are deadlocked, the Supreme Court comes in.

Indeed, the position of Philippine president is vastly different from that of a manager or president of a business corporation.

—OLIVER R. PLAZA, ALU-TUCP at NMR, Cagayan de Oro City

Careless insensitivity

"MERALCO ruling alarms foreign investors," by Ronnel W. Domingo, (PDI, 1/19/04) betrays careless insensitivity on the part of the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP).

The Supreme Court intervention, ECCP says, undermines investor confidence and security of energy supply when it stayed an order of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) authorizing Meralco to effect a rate increase of P0.12 per kilowatt-hour starting Jan. 1, 2004.

This charge is totally uncalled for. First, the Supreme Court is empowered under the Constitution as well as under law and jurisprudence to review ERC orders. Second, the Supreme Court acted on the petitions of "civic advocacy groups" led by Freedom From Debt Coalition alleging that (1) the proceeds of the P0.12 rate hike would be used by Meralco as additional capital and, therefore, should have been collected from its shareholders, not from power consumers, (2) the ERC authorized Meralco to hike its rate when it has barely begun to comply with the Supreme Court order to refund to power consumers the P28 billion it has overcharged them, and (3) the ERC authorized Meralco to hike its

rate without benefit of hearing.

The ECCP, says Domingo's story, wants the ERC independence guaranteed. The ERC is supposed to be the guardian of public interest in the energy sector. As long as it acts as such, its independence will be respected. When it abuses its independence, it is only proper that the Supreme Court review its acts.

The ECCP adds that the ERC decisions should not be "politicized." But Manuel Sanchez, the ERC chair who gave Meralco the go-signal to collect the P0.12 rate increase, was a politician. In fact, after granting Meralco the multibillion-peso favor, he resigned to run for congressman. And believe it or not, despite the ECCP's publicized plea, Sanchez's replacement is also a politician.

But the ECCP's real target is to eliminate the Supreme Court from what it calls the "energy regulatory environment." This will require a constitutional amendment. But will the globalization-oppressed Filipino people agree to let the profit-driven market eliminate the state?

—AMADAO GAT INCIONG, Unit 301 Union Square Condominium, 145 15th Avenue, Cubao, Quezon City

Not even a joke or a movie

"ONE step forward... two steps backward." The Philippines is inevitably going to sink deeper and deeper into the manhole of poverty. But who's to blame except the Filipinos themselves. We started electing the likes of Ramon Revilla, Tito Sotto, Erap Estrada to the Senate before. Now we have Loi Estrada, Noli de Castro and Robert Jaworski in the Senate. Do you remember anything these people have done for you? Now, we have wannabes like Bong Revilla, Lito Lapid, Jinggoy Estrada. What do you expect these people will do if they win?

I have nothing against these celebrities entering the political arena. They have all the right. But please, they should prepare themselves. I believe that every person has his intellectual limitations. Best example is Erap. For me, he was a good mayor of San Juan, he was a

good vice president of our country, but intellectually, he was not a good senator and more, a good president. Where do we think our country is heading if we have FPJ as president?

Being so raw, inexperienced and shy, even if FPJ has the right intentions, he will be duped and used by the people around him. He won't even be aware of this because he doesn't know enough about anything. What does he know about globalization, trade liberalization, UN Security Council, budget deficit, population index, per capita income, GNP, etc.?

Maybe, gunning for other national posts can be understandable even forgivable, but FPJ should not run for the highest office in the country. It's not a joke, it's not a movie.

—EDWIN GONZALES YAP, 8th Avenue, Caloocan City

Lost ideals

TAMA si former Sen. Heherson Alvarez. By welcoming into its ranks John Osmeña and Miriam Defensor-Santiago, the administration seems to be turning its back on the ideals of Edsa II which catapulted Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to Malacañang.

The President should reconcile with the Filipino people, not with Erap's

minions. She has only alienated some Lakas "originals," with her recent decisions.

—DAVE TABANIAG, Blk. 8, Lot 5, 1st Street, Evergreen Subdivision, Barangay Pasong Tamo, Tandang Sora, Quezon City

New vs Old Testament?

I AM writing in reaction to the column, "Valley of Death," of Conrado de Quiros, which appeared on the Jan. 23 issue of the INQUIRER.

The New Testament has never been "believed superior to the Old in its teachings" because it is the same God who inspired the writings of both the Old and New Testament. Jesus claimed, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18). And He adds, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Both the Law and the Prophets always refer to the Old Testament writings. How can De Quiros say the New is superior to the Old when even Jesus said that He did not come to destroy the Old and that His words will by no means pass away?

De Quiros wrote about "the concept of an eye for an eye, which Abraham and the other patriarchs propagated." Abraham never taught this. I dare challenge De Quiros to tell us where in the Bible does it say that Abraham taught "the concept of an eye for an eye."

He also said "that was what the rendering of the veil signified." The rendering of

the veil that separates the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place signified that all God's children, not only the High Priest, can now directly come before the throne of God. I don't see how he can connect "the concept of an eye for an eye" with the rending of the veil. You cannot simply interpret the Scripture anyway you like it.

I also don't know how De Quiros could say that the old ways were no longer binding when Jesus Himself taught that "whoever breaks the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven." Furthermore, Jesus did not preach a newer and kinder world. He preached repentance "for the kingdom of God is at hand."

The Bible is clear in its teaching on kidnapping when God said, "He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:16). God said, "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand" (Deut 32:39). Jesus Himself said, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 11:28)

—EPREN ALVAREZ, christscm_min@yahoo.com

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Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

GenSan folk warned vs 'GMA project'

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The city government has warned residents here against an alleged bogus housing project of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ramon Brotarlo, head of the City Housing and Land Management Office (CHLMO) of this city, said the project being undertaken by the Institute for the Urban Poor (IUP) Inc. has not coordinated with his office on its low-cost housing project.

IUP, which claimed to be a Community Mortgage Program (CMP)

originator, plans to put up a housing project dubbed "Gloria Worker's Village" in Barangay Sinawal.

The project is allegedly financed by the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation (NHMFC), the government agency mandated to implement CMP projects pursuant to Republic Act 7279 or the Urban Development

and Housing Act (UDHA).

But NHMFC president Angelo Salud issued a statement saying the NHMFC has neither accredited nor transacted with the IUP.

In a statement Jan. 29, Salud warned the public not to transact with IUP to avoid being hoaxed.

Brotarlo said his office has been receiving complaints from the public regarding the alleged dubious recruitment activities of IUP.

This, he said, prompted them

to seek clarification from the NHMFC.

In a document obtained by the CHLMO, the group is demanding an initial payment of P4,300 from applicants who wanted to avail of the "Pabahay ng Pangulo Project" here.

The amount represents payments for Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB) registration, survey expenses, documentary costs, site development equity, titling expenses and occupancy fee.

In a telephone interview, Ralph

Taga, who claims to be an administrative officer of IUP here, said IUP is a legitimate organization and the project is part of the low-cost housing project of the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Special Concerns.

He identified a certain Redentor Benedicto as coordinator for Mindanao of the project.

Taga said aside from General Santos, IUP also has a CMP project in Tiguman, Digos City in Davao del Sur.

He said they have been receiving applications from qualified beneficiaries but they have not yet collected any amount in fees.

When asked why the implementation of the project was not properly coordinated with the NHMFC and the city government, Taga said "just contact Mr. Benedicto because he is in the right position to speak about the project."

Taga said the project has the blessings of Malacañang. **Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

ROUNDUP

No work in Bulacan today

IT'S A special non-working day in Bulacan today. President Macapagal-Arroyo issued Proclamation No. 545 declaring Feb. 3 of every year a special non-working day in the province. The proclamation, according to a press release from the Bulacan Public Affairs Office, was issued to give Bulakeños the chance to celebrate the 77th birth anniversary of the late Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, one of the province's most illustrious sons.

Mad man torches school

CEBU CITY—A deranged man torched Jan. 29 the new P1.3-million building of the Sagay National High School in Moalbal, about 89 km southwest of here. Joel Nocos, 30, resident of Barangay Tagbalanga, Moalbal, first destroyed the school's toilet by throwing armchairs and breaking its window panes. High school teacher Marcelo Gabunilas said Nocos went inside the stockroom of the three-classroom building and lighted paper and lumber stored there. The fire immediately spread, he said, because of the cans of paint stored inside the stockroom. **Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau**

2 NPA rebs yield

CEBU CITY—Two members of the New People's Army surrendered last week to the 78th Infantry Battalion (IB) based in Sogod, Cebu. Lt. Col. Rolando Mallao, the Army's 78th IB chief, declined to identify the two rebels aged 18 and 19 for security reasons. Mallao said the rebels, who were members of the Vicente Padayao Command operating in Cebu province, decided to surrender allegedly due to hardship and lack of food while with the rebel movement. **Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau**

Reforestation project

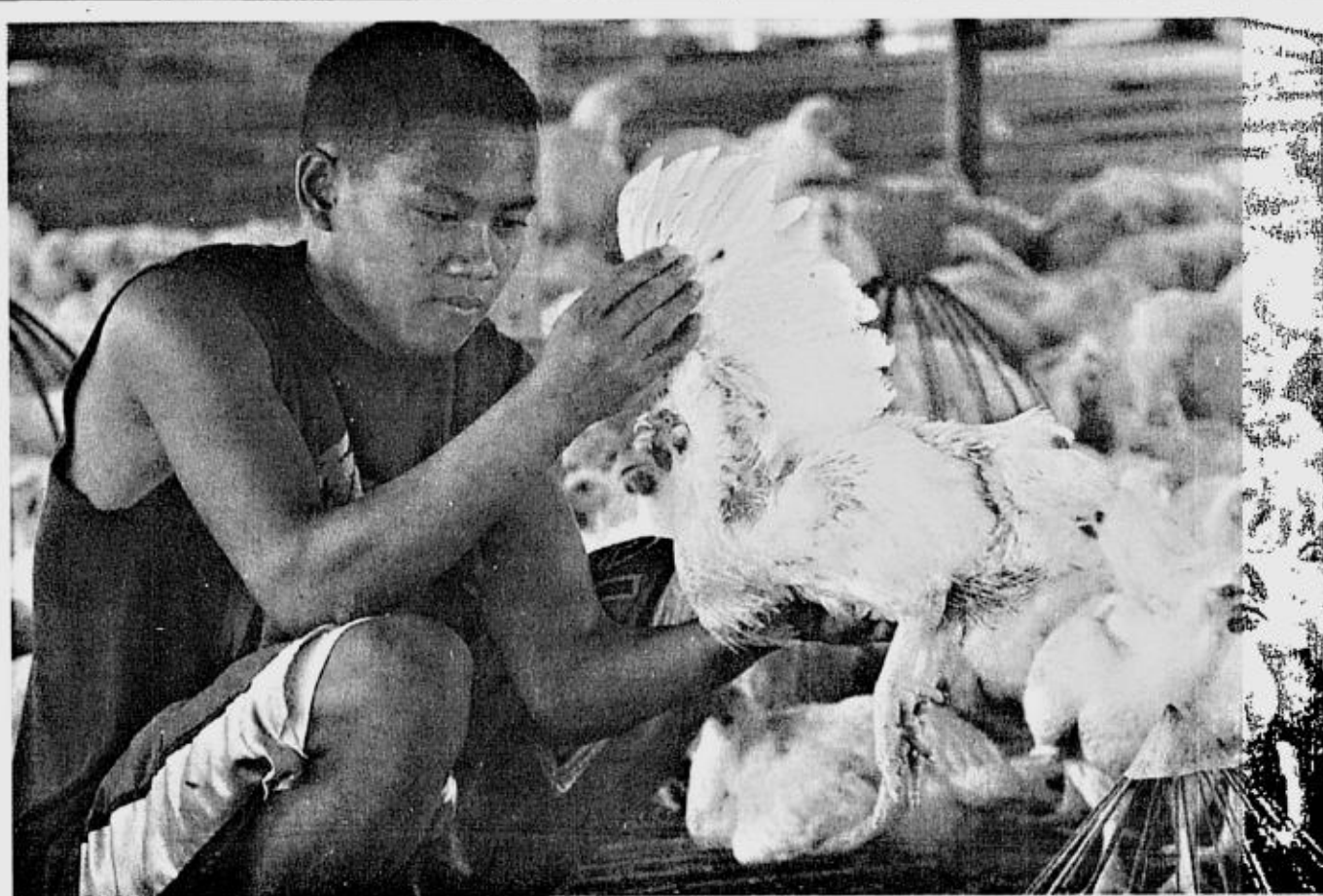
DUMAGUETE CITY—The Negros Occidental provincial government will implement this year a multi-million peso reforestation project to be funded locally. Gov. George Arnaiz said in a recent meeting with the mayors that the provincial government would allocate some P12.5 million for the project and ask them to give counterpart funds. Arnaiz said the tragedies caused by forest destruction should inspire the local officials to join hands in taking care of the forest. The governor said he planned to divide the P12.5 million equally and distribute this to the 25 cities and municipalities of the province. **Romy G. Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau**

Banana venture

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REUTERS

Chinoy trader kidnapped, rescued in Lanao town

OZAMIZ CITY—A quick law enforcement response saved the day for a Filipino-Chinese businessman who was kidnapped along the national highway late afternoon Sunday but recovered about an hour later.

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men aboard the truck, this time commandeered by the kidnappers.

As the bandits fled with Uy, they set a car on fire in the middle of the national highway, obviously to divert attention.

Villagers who witnessed the snatching alerted police and the local government's emergency response unit through UHF radio.

According to broadcaster Jovencio Godoy Jr., who monitored the incident, rescue teams were already organized by Miquiabas as early as 4:30 p.m. just several minutes after the kidnapping was reported to authorities.

Miquiabas even headed one of the teams himself and coordinated action through UHF radio.

The rescue teams were composed of civil-

ian militias, PNP personnel, and troopers of the Philippine Army's 67th Infantry Battalion.

Around 5:30 p.m., Uy and his employee were rescued by authorities in an interior part of Barangay Kawit of nearby Kauswagan town, some 2 km from the national highway.

But the four kidnappers were able to flee after a brief gunfight with law enforcers.

Based on Uy's account, the businessman struggled with the kidnappers upon learning he was to be brought to the mountains.

Uy said he was thinking of ending up dead either way, so he took his chances and scuffled with his captors. He managed to grab the truck's steering wheel and steered it to a muddy wayside. **Ryan D. Rosauro, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

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Datumanong is running for Maguindanao's second congressional district under the ruling Lakas-CMD while his son Tadzmi is seeking a post in the provincial board.

"The father and son tested negative," Bedol said.

The last day of submission of drug test results is on Feb. 15.

Bedol also announced that 10 candidates for various local posts in Maguindanao are facing disqualification charges. **Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

4 killed in collision between 2 motorcycles, van

By Romy G. Amarado
PDI Visayas Bureau

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Dauin town, about 14 km south of here.

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Also killed were Calixto Favor,

driver of the other motorcycle and a resident of Barangay Candauay here, and his passenger identified only as Mylene of Dumaguete.

Injured were Belgian Mack Mae; Taes and his wife Ruby Mae; Tiburcio Alcoriza and Tohade Mesa of Barangay Candauay.

Taes told police he, his wife and two-year-old daughter were in their Nissan Patrol on their way home to Masaplod Sur, Dauin town when in Poblacion, Dauin two motorcycles appeared and the collision was not avoided.

Soldiers say they foiled attempt to bomb cell site

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A report said the military received information from the residents about an NPA encampment in Poblacion Butuan. When attacked, the NPA guerrillas were surprised forcing them to retreat.

The rebels left firearms, ammunition and documents. **Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

2 die in Cotabato as Mecca pilgrimage ends

By Charlie C. Señase
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—Sunday's celebration here of Eid'ul Adha, the end of the Muslim pilgrimage in Mecca, left two Islam devotees dead.

Dr. Ariadne Silongan, chief of the state-run Cotabato Regional and Medical Center, identified the fatalities as Radzak Abdul-

lah, 40, and Anwar Mohammad, 19, both residents of this city.

Police said Abdullah had just finished attending a congregational prayer at the Cotabato City Central Pilot School grounds when an unidentified man shot him thrice at the city plaza shortly before 9 a.m.

Many passersby saw the shooting but were hesitant to testify for

fear of their lives, said a police investigator.

Mohammad, on the other hand, died in a vehicular accident while he and some Muslim friends were on their way home from Kusiong Beach in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao aboard a private jeep that fell in a deep excavation.

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tured skull when his head smashed into a hard portion of the vehicle that caused his death.

The beach party, according to Mohammad's friends, was part of the Eid'ul Adha celebration.

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Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

GenSan folk warned vs 'GMA project'

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The city government has warned residents here against an alleged bogus housing project of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ramon Brotarlo, head of the City Housing and Land Management Office (CHLMO) of this city, said the project being undertaken by the Institute for the Urban Poor (IUP) Inc. has not coordinated with his office on its low-cost housing project.

IUP, which claimed to be a Community Mortgage Program (CMP)

originator, plans to put up a housing project dubbed "Gloria Worker's Village" in Barangay Sinawal.

The project is allegedly financed by the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation (NHMFC), the government agency mandated to implement CMP projects pursuant to Republic Act 7279 or the Urban Development

and Housing Act (UDHA).

But NHMFC president Angelo Salud issued a statement saying the NHMFC has neither accredited nor transacted with the IUP.

In a statement Jan. 29, Salud warned the public not to transact with IUP to avoid being hoaxed.

Brotarlo said his office has been receiving complaints from the public regarding the alleged dubious recruitment activities of IUP.

This, he said, prompted them

to seek clarification from the NHMFC.

In a document obtained by the CHLMO, the group is demanding an initial payment of P4,300 from applicants who wanted to avail of the "Pabahay ng Pangulo Project" here.

The amount represents payments for Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB) registration, survey expenses, documentary costs, site development equity, titling expenses and occupancy fee.

In a telephone interview, Ralph

Taga, who claims to be an administrative officer of IUP here, said IUP is a legitimate organization and the project is part of the low-cost housing project of the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Special Concerns.

He identified a certain Redentor Benedicto as coordinator for Mindanao of the project.

Taga said aside from General Santos, IUP also has a CMP project in Tiguman, Digos City in Davao del Sur.

He said they have been receiving applications from qualified beneficiaries but they have not yet collected any amount in fees.

When asked why the implementation of the project was not properly coordinated with the NHMFC and the city government, Taga said "just contact Mr. Benedicto because he is in the right position to speak about the project."

Taga said the project has the blessings of Malacañang. *Aguiles Z. Zonto, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ROUNDUP

No work in Bulacan today

IT'S A special non-working day in Bulacan today. President Macapagal-Arroyo issued Proclamation No. 545 declaring Feb. 3 of every year a special non-working day in the province. The proclamation, according to a press release from the Bulacan Public Affairs Office, was issued to give Bulakeños the chance to celebrate the 77th birth anniversary of the late Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, one of the province's most illustrious sons.

Mad man torches school

CEBU CITY—A deranged man torched Jan. 29 the new P1.3-million building of the Busay National High School in Moalboal, about 89 km southwest of here. Joel Nocos, 30, resident of Barangay Tagbalanga, Moalboal, first destroyed the school's toilet by throwing armchairs and breaking its window panes. High school teacher Marcelo Gabunilas said Nocos went inside the stockroom of the three-classroom building and looted paper and lumber stored there. The fire immediately spread, he said, because of the cans of paint stored inside the stockroom. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

2 NPA rebs yield

CEBU CITY—Two members of the New People's Army surrendered last week to the 78th Infantry Battalion (IB) based in Sogod, Cebu. Lt. Col. Rolando Malinao, the Army's 78th IB chief, declined to identify the two rebels aged 18 and 19 for security reasons. Malinao said the rebels, who were members of the Vicente Padayao Command operating in Cebu province, decided to surrender allegedly due to hardship and lack of food while with the rebel movement. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Reforestation project

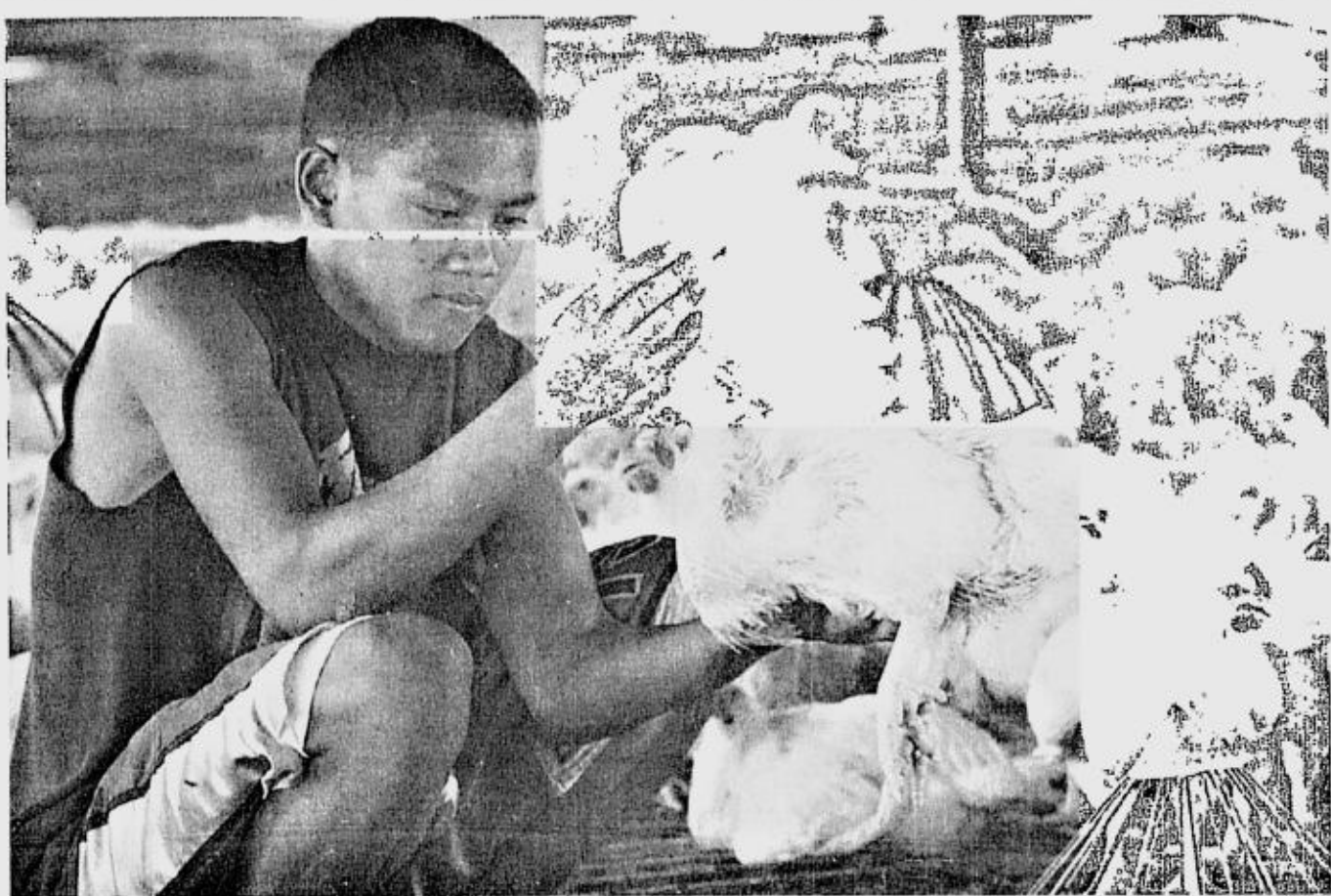
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Cebu jeepney drivers demand P1.50 fare hike

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Two transport groups here are pushing for a P1.50-increase in minimum fares for passenger jeepneys to offset the series of oil price adjustments.

Cerecio Mapula, adviser of the Alyansa sa mga Nagkahiusang

Drayber-Operator Alang sa Reporma (Andar), said his group planned to file its petition for a fare increase before the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) next week.

The Southern Cebu Operators and Drivers Association Inc. (SCODAI), whose members are mostly in southern Cebu towns,

will join the petition.

Andar is composed of 13 transport organizations, with 5,000 members operating in Cebu, Talisay and Mandaue cities. The SCODAI, on the other hand, is composed of five transport organizations and has 1,000 members in Minglanilla, Naga, San Fernando, Carcar and Sibonga towns.

Mapula said the two groups would no longer ask an increase for the succeeding kilometers. At present, the LTFRB has imposed a P0.50 add-on rate for every succeeding kilometer.

Mapula asked the public to understand his group's plea for a fare adjustment because the drivers could no longer absorb the increase in diesel prices.

Since the P4 minimum fare was granted by the LTFRB in 2001, the total increase in the price of diesel has reached P4 per liter, according to Mapula.

In 2001, the price of diesel was P14 per liter. Now, diesel is retailed at more than P18, he said.

Aside from the oil price increases, Mapula said drivers

and operators had to contend with high prices of spare parts.

Andar had filed a petition for fare hike in 2002 but it was junked by the LTFRB main office in Manila.

The board usually decides in favor of the commuters, "but we hope this time to get a decision on our side," Mapula said.

Foreign investors dump RP stocks

From page A1

tial candidate Fernando Poe Jr. for encouraging soldiers to topple President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Several young Army officers had earlier demanded the resignation of Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita and denounced what they said were attempts by the administration to use soldiers to influence the outcome of the election.

Concern about military unrest helped undermine the peso last week as it fell to a record low of 56.22 against the dollar.

Further weighing on sentiment was a downgrade by Moody's Investor Service in the country's credit rating.

"Basically, the litany of news over the past few days continued to weaken investor sentiment. The investors are uncomfortable with the leading presidential candidate," Del Castillo said.

Eagle Equities Inc. president Joseph Roxas said the sharp decline in share prices was partly due to politics.

He said businessmen should convince former Sen. Raul Roco to drop his bid for the presidency to enable the incumbent President, who is favored by the financial markets, to beat Poe. But Roco had ruled out such option.

Roxas also said the regional market was adversely being affected by US Federal Reserve chief Alan Greenspan's hints that the institution may raise interest rates.

Any tightening by the US monetary authority is seen to temper the ongoing global economic rebound.

Roxas saw the market's next support level at 1,430. "The bearish sentiment will likely persist," he said.

Profit taking

Local brokerage ATR-Kim Eng Securities believed that investors opted to take profits yesterday as Poe continued to lead in the survey of Social Weather Stations.

"The actor's perceived inexperience and lack of presidential leadership started to sink among market players particularly foreign institutions, which earlier paid little attention to local developments," ATR-Kim Eng said in its daily report.

Other big losers yesterday were Ayala Corp., which shed 9.84 percent to P5.50, and Bank of the Philippine Islands, down 3 percent to P48.50.

SM Prime Holdings Inc., the country's largest mall developer,

closed 1.64 percent or 10 centavos lower at P6 while "B" shares in Southeast Asia's largest food and beverage firm San Miguel Corp., which are open to foreigners, lost 1.41 percent or P1 to P70.

More foreign borrowings

The country's huge budget deficit was among the factors that Moody's took into account when it downgraded the country's credit rating.

Malacañang yesterday justified the Monetary Board's decision authorizing the government to undertake more foreign borrowings this year to pay off maturing debts and parry speculative attacks on the peso.

In a statement, Ms Macapagal's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said it was "irresponsible" for critics to inject politics in this matter of public interest.

The MB, the policy-making body of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, had approved the government's plan to borrow from abroad to fill up the shortfall in its foreign exchange financing requirement estimated at between \$1.6 billion and \$2 billion.

A source said the government was planning to raise at least \$500 million through the issuance of a 10-year global bond.

The borrowing mandate has triggered speculation that Malacañang would borrow overseas recklessly to raise money for the President's campaign.

"The authority given by the MB is aimed at cushioning the effects of maturing foreign debts we have incurred and the threat of the further weakening of the peso," Bunye said.

While the government had been borrowing money from abroad since last year, the funds were only good for the first quarter this year.

The government's foreign fund raising activities this year have been stymied by fears on the political front, which prompted cancellations of programmed bond offerings due to rising spreads.

The MB's green light should give the government the leeway to go into the foreign debt market anytime to raise its financing requirements for the entire year before the elections.

Bunye said the government needed additional funds not only to cover debt servicing cost but also to sustain vital economic and social programs. *With reports from Reuters and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Gas prices increase anew by 80¢/liter

From page A1

by about \$5 per barrel of unleaded gasoline and automotive diesel," Martinez said.

Asked whether this meant another round of price increases this month, Martinez said that would depend on how prices would go for the rest of the month.

P23.30 per liter

Based on government records, the latest price adjustments raised the gasoline prices of Eastern and Flying V to between P21.60 and P23.30 per liter.

Pilipinas Shell now sells gasoline at between P21.85 and P23.20 per liter; diesel, between P16.80 and P18.35; and kerosene, between P17.70 and P18.35.

Both Eastern and Flying V either import their supplies or buy from domestic bulk suppliers.

Data from the Department of Energy show that the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS)—the benchmark for prices of finished products in the region—rates for gasoline went up by \$5.68 to \$44.25 per barrel in January from \$39.53 last December.

Average MOPS prices for diesel went up by \$4.72 to \$41.42 per barrel in January from \$35.74 the previous month.

At the same time, average Dubai crude prices went up by \$0.77 to \$28.87 per barrel in January from \$28.10 last December.

The peso depreciated by 10 centavos to an average of P55.55 to the dollar in January from P55.45 the month before.

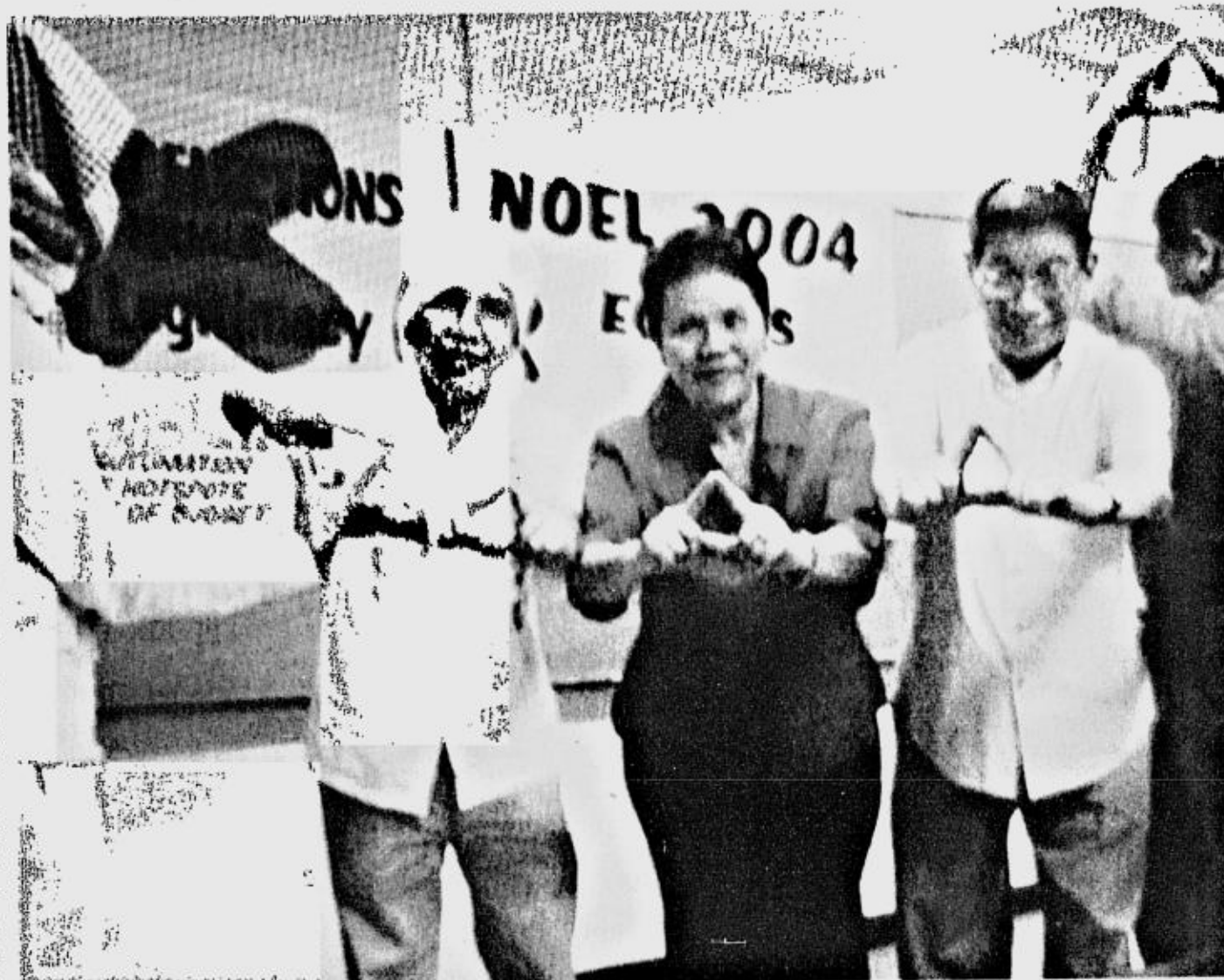
Last month, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. said the increases in oil prices were temporary and were partly due to the excessively high prices being maintained by

the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec).

Perez reiterated this in a talk with reporters last week, adding that the trend was also brought about by the seasonal increase in demand for the winter months.

He had said Opec was not following its self-imposed rule that it should move to temper rising prices by increasing daily production by 500,000 barrels—if and when crude prices traded above \$28 a barrel for more than 20 days.

"Keeping prices above \$28 would eventually work against Opec," Perez said.



LINDA Montayre (center), chair of the People's Consultative Assembly-Koalisyon, is shown in this video footage from TV Net25 of her group's press conference to explain the "no elections" scenario. EDWIN COLLANTES

Montayre surfaces, also calls for 'No-el'

From page A1

open to call for a "no elections" in May.

She claimed that the presidential candidate, who is supposed to win in a clean election, would be cheated by Malacañang to enable President Macapagal-Arroyo to stay in power.

So, Montayre said, it would be better not to hold the elections and just form a government supported by the people.

"Everything is already in place, it's just a matter of implementing it," she said.

The PCA was among the Edsa II forces that helped install Ms Macapagal in power, but it was one of the first to withdraw support from her because of alleged corruption in the administration.

At a press briefing in Quezon City, Montayre distanced herself from the group of Saycon, secretary general of the Council on Philippine Affairs, who is expected to be charged with sedition for an alleged coup plot involving junior military officers belonging to Kawal Pilipino (Filipino Soldier).

But Montayre, one of the signatories to the No-el (No-elections) 2004 ad run by the Inquirer on Jan. 9, said the Kawal Pilipino's allegation that the camp of Ms Macapagal was spying on her rivals in the presidential election was true.

Retired commodore

Montayre was joined at the press briefing by businessman Benjamin Sim, Romeo de la Cruz

of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Antonio Icasas of the Catholic Church Renewal Group, retired Commodore Ismael Appari, Mashur Jundam who represented groups in Mindanao, a middle-level government official who refused to be named, and a lieutenant who concealed his face.

Appari was once mentioned in military intelligence reports last year as among those allegedly involved in persuading soldiers to overthrow the Macapagal administration.

He said he was not speaking on behalf of the Association of Generals and Flag Officers Inc. "I am speaking as one voice representing other voices in our country and this is what we have agreed to do, one last chance for our country, a total transformation."

The lieutenant gave a brief statement saying he was representing officers who are not graduates of the Philippine Military Academy but who are "very concerned about the state of corruption in government especially the Armed Forces."

'Total transformation'

The PCA-Koalisyon and the Alliance for National Transformation said the shelved automated counting machines, identification of election hot spots, reenactment of the 2003 budget, bribery of local officials, disqualification case against opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. and even an alleged assassination

plot were all designed to legitimize the presidency of Ms Macapagal.

Instead of elections, the two group spoke of "total transformation" which, they said, could be achieved through a "people power"-type of action with "strategic" support from the military.

This would be followed by a constitutional form of transition with either deposed President Joseph Estrada or Vice President Teofisto Guingona, or both, as heads of state.

"We are acceptable to the constitutional fact that Estrada is still the President and that he is just on leave," Montayre said.

"Ms Macapagal will have to face the consequences of all the crimes and corruption committed by her administration, unless she voluntarily steps down before it happens," she said.

Asked if she feared arrest for openly talking about No-el, Montayre said "There is nothing illegal about what we are doing because we are only using people's sovereignty, with the protection of our military in calling for Ms Macapagal to vacate Malacañang."

Squawking

In Malacañang, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye urged Saycon and other civilians involved in the botched destabilization plot against the administration to stop "squawking" and just tackle in court the anti-sedition charges to be filed against them.

Saycon had earlier called on the Kawal Pilipino soldiers, whose testimonies formed the basis of the sedition charges to be filed by the National Bureau of Investigation against him and other civilians, to "tell the truth" and declare that no plots to overthrow the government were discussed during their meetings.

Bunye said the Palace considered the Kawal Pilipino affair, in which a group of young officers accused Ms Macapagal of putting her election rivals under military surveillance, a strictly "court matter."

Bunye assured the public that the filing of charges against Saycon, three other civilians and five junior officers showed that the threat of destabilization had already been crushed.

Lawyer Leonard de Vera, chair of the Equal Justice for All Movement, refused to defend Saycon in the sedition case.

De Vera said Saycon phoned him on Saturday, inviting him to serve as counsel in the event that the NBI filed the charge. He said he declined the offer the following day, saying that defending Saycon would give him a "perception problem."

"It would put me in a position where I would be perceived as anti-Quirino and pro-FPJ," he told the Inquirer on Sunday.

"Because of its likely effects on me, I felt I had to call Boy [Saycon] and beg off." Reports from Arlyn de la Cruz (contributor), Christian V. Esguerra and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

Girl in car crash survives on crackers

From page A1

body," Steve Volden of the Arizona Department of Public Safety told Agence France Presse.

"[The mother] apparently died five days earlier in the accident," which took place 32 km north of the small city of Globe, when the car struck a tree and fell over an embankment, he said.

A policewoman was stunned to find the toddler, Angel Emery, lying next to the lifeless body of 44-year-old Patricia Marie Emery-Wade in the vehicle that was several meters from the nearest road in the center of the state.

Conscious

The apparently was conscious and apparently aware of what had happened, Volden said, but was desperately in need of food and water after being rescued from the vehicle that was lying on its side.

"When our highway patrol officer found her, she was really de-

hydrated and the first thing she asked for was water," he said, adding that the girl had eked out the crackers that were in the car to stay alive.

She was immediately airlifted to the Maricopa Medical Center where she was being treated late Monday for dehydration and severe frost bite on her feet.

Strapped to seat

Police said the youngster appeared to have been strapped in to a seat in the back of the vehicle at the time of the accident, but that she crawled to her mother in the front after the crash.

The Arizona Republic newspaper quoted the dead woman's neighbor, Ronald Racin, as saying that family members had reported mother and child missing after they failed to return home last Wednesday.

"Her daughter was her whole life," Racine said. "She was a very loving person." AFP

FOUR DIGIT

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METRO

Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

MEGALOTTO 6/45

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3 convicted kidnappers get 6-month lease on life

By Margaux Ortiz and Luige del Puerto

A PASIG City Regional Trial Court judge has reset the execution date of three convicted kidnappers from Feb. 12 to Aug. 20.

Arthur Pangilinan, Yambot Lopez and Reynaldo Amador were convicted for the 1994 kidnapping of Mandaluyong businessman Teodoro Garcia.

A fourth convict, Jun Notarte, is still at large.

In June 1998, Judge Pablo Rosas of Pasig City RTC branch 70 sentenced to death the four men.

According to Maria Socorro Diokno, secretary general of the Free Legal Assistance Group, the court initially miscalculated the date of the convicts' execution. The execution date was two months short of what was prescribed by law.

According to the amended order,

the court reset the date of execution, pursuant to Republic Act 8177, amending Republic Act 7659, which provides that "the death sentence shall be carried out not earlier than one year nor later than 18 months after the judgement has become final and executory."

Diokno, lawyer of two of the convicts, said the court issued the amended order last November, after Bureau of Corrections officials pointed out the initial discrepancy.

Diokno said she wrote Bureau of Corrections officials last week and reminded them of the amended order because the date of the original and erroneous execution is nearing.

Dionisio Santiago, BuCor head and Justice undersecretary, in turn wrote Judge Rosas about the date discrepancy.

"A rumor spread at the New Bilibid Prisons last week, saying that the three convicts will be executed in February," Diokno said in a phone interview.

She stressed the rumor caused her clients to be "extremely worried."

Convicts Pangilinan, Lopez and Yambot were scheduled to die by lethal injection on Feb. 12.

The Supreme Court affirmed the lower court's death penalty decision on April 30, 2003.

In March 1994, the police arrested Pangilinan, Lopez and

Yambot at the Ortigas Center in Pasig City.

The three men, along with Notarte, had just picked up the ransom money and were on their way back to the safehouse when pursuing policemen cornered the culprits and engaged them in a shootout.

Notarte was able to flee. But the kidnap victim, Garcia, miraculously survived the exchange and emerged from the kidnappers' vehicle unharmed.

PNP report identifies 12 Metro 'hot spots'

By Christian Esguerra

VIOLENCE could erupt in 12 of the 17 cities and municipalities of Metro Manila come election time, the Philippine National Police warned yesterday.

Director Avelino Razon Jr., PNP director for operations, identified these areas as the cities of Caloocan, Makati, Quezon, Manila, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Pasig and Marikina, and the municipalities of Taguig, Pateros, Navotas and San Juan.

Hot spots

Razon named the "hot spots" following a joint command conference with the Commission on Elections, Armed Forces and the National Security Council at Camp Aguinaldo last week.

Authorities, he said, came up with the list in Metro Manila after considering the intense political rivalry and the number of election-related violence in these areas during the 2001 elections.

"We're monitoring these areas to prevent violence," Razon told reporters.

In the provinces, areas are classified as hot spots based on recorded activities of the New People's Army.

'White area'

Razon said Metro Manila was a "white area" for the last criterion, claiming that NPA activities in the metropolis were limited to drug peddling and mass actions, unlike in provinces, where extortion was prevalent.

But Razon pointed out that "it doesn't necessarily mean that there will be violence" in the areas in Metro Manila identified as "election areas of concern."

The cast of characters, for instance, is now different in areas such as Parañaque.

Mayor Joey Marquez is no longer up against his nemesis, former-mayor

Pablo Olivarez, who is now his political ally.

Having served three straight terms, the comedian-turned-politician will be seeking a congressional seat against former National Security Adviser Roilo Golez. Olivarez, in the meantime, will be running for mayor against Marquez's estranged wife, Alma Moreno.

In Caloocan, the Asistios will be pitted against the emerging political dynasty of Mayor Reynaldo Malonzo, who toppled the Asistios in 1995.

Caloocan battle

Since he could no longer run for mayor, Malonzo will be running for congressman in the city's first district.

His former live-in partner, Gigi Ennace-Malonzo, will be running against former Mayor Macario "Boy" Asistio Jr.

Asistio's younger brother, Luis, is running for congressman in the city's second district.



WITH the elections fast approaching, the police are tightening the watch at checkpoints like this one along Marcos Highway in Cainta, Rizal, to prevent violence and criminality in and around Metro Manila.

JOAN BONDOC

METROBRIEFS

Cops killed in crash

TWO LAWEN, including the driver of Eastern Police District director Chief Supt. Oscar Valenzuela, yesterday were killed when their vehicle rammed a building in Pasig City. PO1 Christopher Orig, 29, and PO1 Wayne Anota, 32, were pronounced dead at the St. Theresa Hospital, 100 meters from the accident scene, said SPO2 Manuel Umagaling. Orig was driving a Honda Civic (TAM 147) along C. Raymundo Avenue when the car hit an elevated portion of the highway. On impact, Orig lost control of the car, which crossed the other lane and hit the gate of the E. A. Construction office.

Luige del Puerto

Nievera has 2 days

SINGER Bert Nievera, his wife Carolina, and four others in the Country Waffles business have until Thursday to air their side before the National Bureau of Investigation, if they wish to defer the filing of charges against them. If the six would not heed the NBI summons, the bureau would have to file the charges with the Department of Justice, an NBI official said. Aside from the Nieveras, those summoned regarding the Country Waffles investment case were Charissa Ofrecio, Januario Solter, Caroline Solter and Alberto Buenviaje. The six are facing charges of syndicated estafa—a non-bailable offense.

Lella Salaverria

Fire in north Metro

FIRE struck an abandoned cold storage facility in Malabon City and a sardines warehouse in Navotas. At 6 p.m. Sunday, fire broke out in the storage facility at the Nokoroma Compound, MacArthur Highway, Barangay Potrero. The facility has long been abandoned after a fire razed it on Jan. 2. Firefighters managed to put out the fire about an hour later. At 4 a.m. yesterday, another fire broke out in the storage room of Youngstown Sardines on C3 Road, Dagat-Dagatan Avenue, Navotas. The fire was put out at 5:36 a.m.

Edson Tandoc Jr.

Killer uncle falls

FLORENTINO Malapit, who had been accused of killing his nephew, was arrested Sunday night on Dapitan Street in Manila. Malapit, 56, a former seaman, allegedly stabbed and killed Roberto Malapit, 33, on Jan. 13. The victim reportedly reprimanded his uncle for sleeping with an underage boy. After he was arrested, Malapit was identified by Roberto's wife as the killer, according to chief Senior Insp. Alejandro Yanquiling, Jr. of the Western Police District.

Lella Salaverria

Ailing Abadilla convict decries 'persecution' by NBP officials

By Tina Santos and Margaux Ortiz

ONE OF the five men convicted for the slay of former Col. Rolando Abadilla yesterday appealed to the government to look into attempts by New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) officials to take him out of legal confinement at a Quezon City hospital and haul him back

to the national penitentiary.

Lenido Lumanog, 47, is confined at the National Kidney Transplant Institute while recuperating from a kidney transplant.

Through his lawyer Soliman Santos Jr., Lumanog wrote Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Department of Justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez and Bureau of

Corrections Director Dionisio Santiago, to look into the "bureaucratic inefficiency or malicious persecution."

NBP officers tried to get Lumanog out of the hospital on Saturday.

But NBP chief Venancio Tesoro yesterday said that Lumanog was not being singled out for return to the national penitentiary.

"At present, we have 22 inmate patients who need the services of two guards per shift or six guards per day," Tesoro told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

"We need more guards inside the NBP because a significant number of the guards have resigned or retired," he added.

Because of the election ban on the hiring or movement of em-

ployees, Tesoro said he was being forced to take back the 220 guards of the inmate patients.

"Since Lumanog was declared fit for discharge by the NPTI, I gave orders to bring the patient to NBP Hospital, where he could recover fully," Tesoro said, adding Lumanog's guards could then perform their duties inside the NBP.

PDEA employee says colleague molested her

SHE SAID he molested her. But he said it was all about drugs.

The Quezon City Prosecutor's Office, however, found the statements of a 28-year-old female employee of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) more believable.

It thus recommended the filing of acts of lasciviousness charges against SPO2 Lucio Flores, reportedly also assigned at the PDEA.

According to the complainant, Flores invited her for a ride in his car in the morning of April 8, 2003. Being offmates, she assented.

During the ride, Flores allegedly began saying vulgarities. She protested and he promised to stop what he was doing.

After a while, however, Flores allegedly suddenly stopped the car and grabbed the woman's

arm and private parts.

The woman said she suffered injuries when she struggled to free herself from the clutches of Flores before jumping out of the car.

Flores could not be reached for comment, but according to his counter-affidavit, the allegations against him were not true.

The affidavit said it was the woman who hitched a ride. It added that a certain Insp. Fernando Hernandez and SPO3 Rodrigo Desilos were with them in the car.

The affidavit of Flores alleged that the woman filed the complaint due to a misunderstanding over the supposed sharing of shabu they recovered from a drug suspect.

Assistant City Prosecutor Catherine Manodon, however, found probable cause to hold Flores liable.

Tina Santos

NPD lawman accuses other cops of bribery

POLICEMEN at the Northern Police District yesterday were startled during their flag ceremony when one of their officers took the microphone and went on to accuse other policemen of extorting money from 14 suspected illegal gamblers in detention.

The allegations were based on complaints from the suspected gamblers' relatives that members of the NPD Special Projects Section had asked P2,000 from each of the detained men in exchange for their release, policemen who attended the flag ceremony told the INQUIRER.

But special projects chief Bong

Padilla denied the allegations and said that the arrested residents were the ones who tried to bribe him, but they refused.

The 14 suspects were arrested on Saturday night, allegedly for engaging in an illegal cockfight.

Padilla said the suspects were put under "custodial investigation" over the weekend because the city prosecutor's office was closed.

District deputy director for operations Virgilio Espija yesterday said that they would look into the residents' complaints.

But after the controversial speech, the 14 arrested people were released. Edson Tandoc Jr.

Why change the name of Taft Avenue?

WHY DO legislators have this propensity of changing names of places or streets when they have more important things to do?

Are legislators so devoid of a sense of history that they renege historical streets after people close to their hearts?

Take the case of Taft Avenue that spans Manila and Pasay City. Taft Avenue is named after William Howard Taft, the country's first governor general during the American regime.

Taft, who worked for Philippine independence, later became United States President and Supreme Court Chief Justice.

Well, Taft may soon be sidelined in favor of former Sen. Jose W. Diokno. Senate Bill 2011, which would rename Manila's main street, was passed by the Senate last week.

Not that Diokno, one of the prominent men who stood up to the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, is undeserving of the honor.

But there could be other streets that can be named after the honorable late senator.

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza is right in opposing the renaming of Taft Avenue into Jose W. Diokno Avenue. He says that the legislators should have consulted the local government if it wanted the street renamed.

"I don't question their power to legislate, but they should have at least considered local sensitivities," Atienza says.

At the rate major streets are being renamed, there will come a time when this country will have no trace of

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo



its colorful past.

For example, what was the reason for changing Dewey Boulevard into Roxas Boulevard many years ago? The first name of the boulevard by the sea was in honor of Commodore George Dewey, whose fleet defeated the Spanish armada in the Battle of Manila Bay. The Spanish defeat led to the US colonization of the Philippines.

Okay, okay, we're trying to forget our past, if that's what our legislators want. In that case, they should also change the names of historical places like Intramuros.

What's wrong with our past, anyway? We were subjugated by the Spaniards and the Americans against our will. But our conquerors made our history and culture colorful.

The picture of former President Cory Aquino condoling with Celia Diaz-Laurel, widow of former Vice President Salvador "Doy" Laurel, was amusing.

What was more amusing was Ms Aquino being quoted during Doy's wake as saying he was the "better politician."

The "langaw" (fly) that Ms Aquino referred to when she was still President is now the

"better politician."

How very show biz of Ms Aquino!

Truth to tell, Cory wouldn't have attended Doy's wake if it were not dictated by protocol or good manners.

Although she's a devout Catholic, Cory is one kind of person who never forgives and forgets her enemies. Anything or anybody connected to the Marcoses or people who became her enemy when she was in power were anathema to the lady.

Cory was never a magnanimous leader.

When former Misamis Oriental Gov. Homobono Adaza, commenting on Laurel's contribution to the nation, said that Doy "reaped a whirlwind of ingratitude from the personalities that he helped assume the levers of power," he was referring to Ms Aquino.

Laurel, in an act of statesmanship, gave way to Cory and agreed to become her vice presidential candidate. As head of the opposition during the Marcos regime, Laurel would have become the standard bearer in the snap presidential election.

One of the reasons Laurel gave way to Cory Aquino's widow was her promise to become a transition president after Marcos.

Aquino promised to step down after serving as president from several months to a year and call for new elections.

She never kept her promise. And the rest is history.

So, look where we are now.

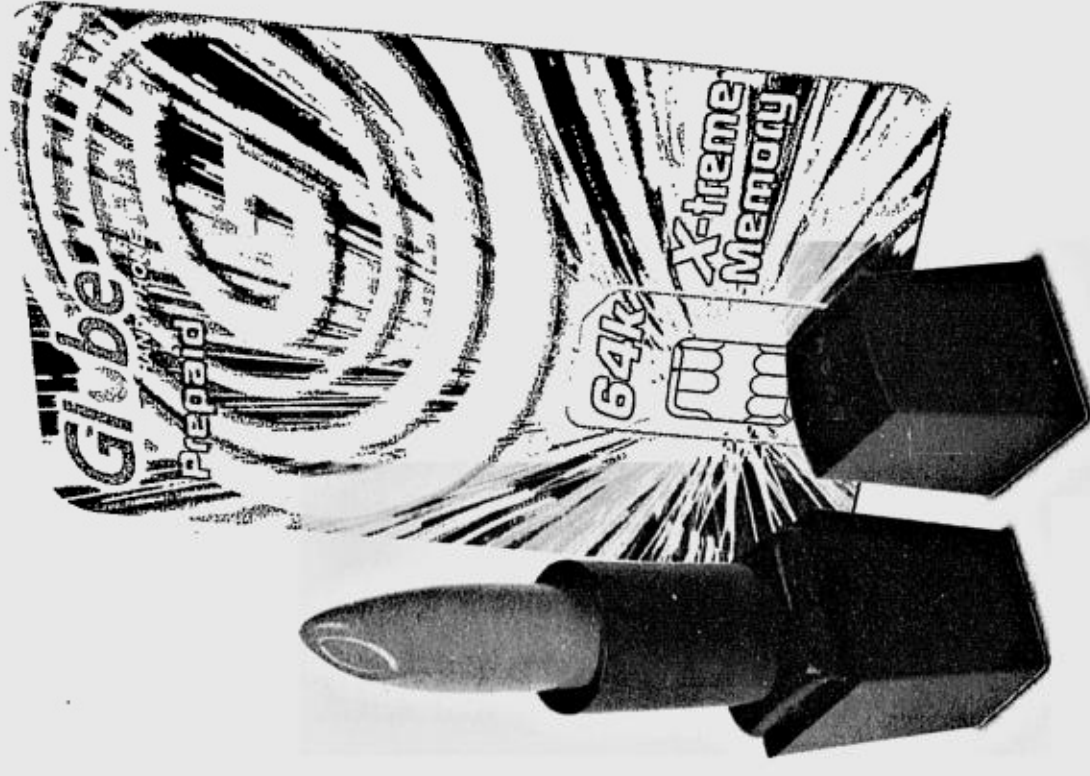


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BASKETBALL: NBA - Lakers vs Pacers, 8 p.m. (7-8 p.m.); Solar Sports - Los Angeles takes on Indiana in what could be a preview of the Finals.
Vintage NBA - the ABA, 11 a.m., Solar Sports - Travel back in time and learn more about the league which introduced the three-point shot and the red, white and blue ball.
Hardwood Classics - Stars vs. Nets, Game 5, 1984 Eastern First Round, 12 noon, Solar Sports - Going against the odds, New Jersey knock off defending NBA Champion Philadelphia for the Nets' franchise's first ever NBA Playoff victory! The Nets' dynamic backcourt duo of "Sugar" Michael Ray Richardson and Otis Birdsong each score 24 points.



Compiled by L. Manguiat

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SPORTS

9 NSAs lead move to oust Buhain

By Marc Anthony Reyes

CITING "lack of wisdom and ability," nine national sports associations have started a drive for the ouster of Eric Buhain as chair of the Philippine Sports Commission.

The disgruntled officials hope to get the other members from the 36-strong NSA group making up the Philippine Olympic Committee to sign a petition addressed to President Macapagal-Arroyo seeking the resignation of Buhain from what they say is a "grossly mismanaged" agency.

The complaint against Buhain actually boiled down to "lack of concern and support" for the training of national athletes and the activities of the NSAs.

But Buhain, a former bemedalled swimmer, yesterday said the accusations had no basis since the PSC had allotted 80 percent of its overall budget, or roughly P250 million, to the NSAs in 2003 alone.

The PSC chief added that of the P100 million financial assistance approved by the

board, the agency has already disbursed P85 million. The balance was to be given "subject to the availability of funds."

"We never had fixed funds and apparently the NSAs don't take it seriously when we say the funds are subject to availability of funds," said Buhain, who marked his second year in office last month.

Buhain explained that PSC relies on the monthly doleouts from the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation which is never exact and depends on the revenues of the agency.

The nine presidents who signed the petition were Monchito Ilagan (swimming), Noel Buenaventura (gymnastics), Rey Jaylo (judo), Benjie Ramos (rowing), Vic Valbuena (table tennis), Richard Gomez (fencing),



BUHAIN: Accusations have no basis.

Luciano Lim (bodybuilding), Sim Chi Tat (canoeing) and Claudio Altura (sailing).

Sources said the NSA chiefs met with POC president Celso Dayrit and bowling

head Steve Hontiveros and poured out their grievances, particularly the delay of their receivables from the PSC.

The disgruntled NSA presidents, who met secretly on Jan. 4 at the Dusit Hotel to plot their moves, have been making the rounds at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, gathering signatures from fellow NSA heads who may have gripes against the PSC.

"This is to express our discontent and loss of confidence on the present leadership of Chair Eric Buhain of the Philippine Sports Commission," read a part of their petition letter dated Jan. 14.

It added: "We seriously question his (Buhain's) wisdom and ability to lead Philippine sports especially in this time that we are preparing for the 2005 Southeast Asian Games."

The letter also said that the PSC is "grossly mismanaged" and that Buhain's "continued presence (as PSC chief) undermines your (GMA) good intention to promote the program of a strong republic."

"It's unfortunate that despite all these, they (NSAs) still felt that we have neglected them," said Buhain. "But gauging from the (Philippine) success in the (Vietnam) SEA Games, we can say that we have focused our attention on the NSAs and the athletes."

In 2003, Buhain said, P84 million was given directly to the NSAs, on top of the P100 million in allowances to the national athletes, P36 million in food allowance and P6 million for rentals and utility bills of the NSA offices around RMSC.

He admitted that the electricity in some NSA offices had been cut because of PSC's failure to pay on time.

Before the Vietnam SEAG last December, the PSC was reported to owe the NSAs P80 million.

A PSC official wondered, however, why the top three performing NSAs in the SEAG were not among the signatories.

Athletics earned eight golds, while wushu and taekwondo had six and five golds, respectively.

Pacquiao inherits lucrative HBO deal Barrera junked

By Salven L. Lagumbay

CABLE giant HBO has officially rescinded its million-dollar deal with Marco Antonio Barrera in favor of boosting the image of Filipino Manny Pacquiao in the pay-per-view market.

Kevin Flannery, HBO spokesman, indicated in an interview with the Mexican press that the decision to nullify Barrera's deal, reportedly worth millions of dollars, came after the Mexican suffered a devastating 11th-round technical knockout at the hands of Pacquiao last November.

Flannery also added that HBO is now planning to invest millions on Pacquiao should the Filipino successfully wrest the WBA/IBF titles from Mexican Juan Manuel Marquez.

HBO has set a May 22 date for the Pacquiao-Marquez fight in the US although Rod Nazario, the Filipino champ's business manager, said the title clash is not a done deal.

"We still have to negotiate with HBO and the handlers of Marquez regarding the fight," said Nazario when he accompanied Pacquiao



PACQUIAO's stunning victory against Barrera has convinced HBO to abandon the Mexican.

during a recent visit at the INQUIRER where the boxing hero was treated to a dinner as the paper's "Man of the Year."

Nazario, still recovering from a minor surgery, and Pacquiao are scheduled to leave for the US in the middle of this month.

Flannery said the Barrera deal with HBO can still be revived once the Mexican redeems himself with victories against name boxers.

Barrera was earlier scheduled to see action on March 13 in the undercard of the Shane Mosley-Winky Wright unification duel in Las Vegas, but the plan was shelved due to lack of funding and failure to lure a name boxer to fight Barrera.

Barrera is now being groomed to see action on March 19 at the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles against a soon-to-be-named opponent, this time to be televised by the smaller Telefutura network.

Meanwhile, promoter Bob Arum also expressed interest in pitting Marquez against Pacquiao as a victory could also mean an HBO contract for the Mexican.

"A great possibility exists that the fight with Pacquiao is done, therefore we are fighting so that Marquez obtains a juicy contract, like the one that Barrera had, if Marquez beats Pacquiao," Arum stated.

FIESTA IMPORT

Phone Pals tap 6-8 ABA veteran

By June Navarro

ITS lineup boosted by two key acquisitions at the start of the year, Talk 'N Text gained added power by getting a prolific inside-outside operator as the Phone Pals' import for the coming PBA Fiesta Conference.

Randy Holcom, listed as 6-foot-8 who had an impressive stint with the Fresno Heat Wave in the ABA, arrived yesterday together with the entire Talk 'N Text squad, which went through a two-week workout under US NCAA coach Jerry Tarkanian in the United States.

"The workouts were really exhausting. Lahat kami napiga (We were drained out) from the players to the coaches. As for Holcom, he's a workhorse fit for a team like ours," said a Talk 'N Text official.

Scouting reports revealed Holcom, who almost made the Atlanta Hawks roster in the NBA this season, to be a good defender, who could play the small or power forward position with utmost efficiency.

The outside shooting of the Phone Pals was honed further by world-renowned shooting coach Dave Hopla in their workout under Tarkanian.

Hopla is credited for the vast improvement of LA Lakers' Kobe Bryant and Stephon Marbury of Phoenix, among others, not to mention the shooting techniques of several NBA teams and US NCAA squads.

Before their US trip, the Phone Pals obtained 2002 PBA MVP Willie Miller from Red Bull Barako and 6-foot-9 Yancy De Ocampo from the FedEx Express in a pair of trade negotiations that made the Manny V. Pangilinan-owned ballclub almost invincible on paper.



MILLER



DE OCAMPO

De Ocampo, the league's top rookie pick in 2002, and Miller joined 2003 MVP Asi Taulava, Rookie of the Year Jimmy Alapag, Bong Ravena, Harvey Carey, Patrick Fran, Mark Telan, Vic Pablo and Donbel Belano in the Talk 'N Text lineup.

In another development, Lenny Cooke of Purefoods was set to arrive last night on board a Northwest Airlines carrier, noted

player-agent Mike Gonzales told the INQUIRER.

But among the imports he brought to the country, Gonzales singled out Coca-Cola's Mark Sanford as the most impressive so far.

"Sanford is in shape and plays very good in practice despite experiencing dizziness and fatigue due to jetlag," Gonzales quoted Coca-Cola coach Chot Reyes as saying.

The 6-foot-8 Sanford arrived Saturday morning and immediately plunged into a strenuous Tigers' workout.

Only Alaska has yet to secure a reinforcement for the PBA Fiesta Conference on Feb. 22.

The INQUIRER learned that Alaska coach Tim Cone, who is in the US, is torn between former UCLA standout Matt Barnes and the 6-foot-7 Darrin Johnson.

Other imports who have either signed up or committed their services are Carlos Miller (Red Bull Barako), Alvin Jefferson (FedEx), Sta. Lucia's Lamayn Wilson, Barangay Ginebra's Jarmaine Walker, Art Long (SMB) and Shell's Marek Ondera.

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TABIQUE diagnosed with lymphoma.
ROMY HOMILLADA

UP cager faces fight of his life

By Dennis U. Eroa

UNIVERSITY of the Philippines playmaker Lino 'Jon-jon' Tabique, whose small size belies his huge appetite for winning, is facing the biggest fight of his young life.

Only 21, the sophomore Arts and Letters student from Diliman known for his daredevil drives and outside shooting, was recently diagnosed with lymphoma.

Lymphoma is a broad term encompassing a variety of cancers of the lymphatic system, which helps filter out bacteria and is important

in fighting diseases.

The 5-foot-7 Tabique, a prized recruit two years ago from the San Beda Red Cubs, acted as backup for Marvin Cruz last year.

He was with now Ateneo star Lewis Tenorio and Magnum Memberre and San Beda Lions' Arjun Cordero when the Cubs won the NCAA junior title in 1999. Tabique also boasted of two national intersecondary titles.

Initially, the soft-spoken Tabique was initially diagnosed with tuberculosis but further tests at the Capitol Medical Center in Medical City revealed the cancer.

"He's a very good boy. I have nothing bad to say against him," said multi-titled San Beda coach Ato Badolato, Tabique's coach from grade school to high school.

Badolato said it took him two days before having the guts to call Tabique upon learning of his former ward's condition.

"Yes, he has cancer of the lymph nodes," said Badolato. "Jon-jon's a fighter and the whole San Beda community is behind him in this fight."

Lito Vergara, UP coach, said a fundraiser is being finalized to help Tabique.

TOUR DE LANGKAWI Espiritu vanguard of Casino assault

A SELECTION of veteran Tour Pilipinas cyclists, representing the Casino Filipino Trade Team, will answer the starter's gun on Friday in the tough 10-day Tour de Langkawi in Malaysia.



ESPIRITU

The Casino Filipino riders will be led by Langkawi Tour veteran and 1996 Marlboro Tour champion Victor Espiritu and Ryan Tanguilig, Pagcor Sports' top rider in last year's Tour Pilipinas.

"The Filipinos will be pitted against some of the best riders in the world," said Louie Carlos, Pagcor consultant for sports development and Casino Filipino Team project director.

Trained by Olympian Norberto Oconer, the other members of the team are Tour of Metro Manila champion Lucien Lloyd Reynante, Mercurio Ramos, Roland Gorantes, Alfie Catalan, Villamor Baluyut and Albert Primero.

Espiritu was the best Filipino finisher last year, winding up fifth among Asian riders. The national team also placed fifth in the Asian classification behind Iran, Japan, the Wong Kam Po-powered Telekom All-Stars and Malaysia.

Tour Pilipinas revives 'killer' Baguio stage

THE BAGUIO-to-Baguio stage has been restored as the toughest stage in the 2004 Tour Pilipinas, which kicks off March 18 in Sorsogon and winds up with a circuit race in Manila on April 4.

There are five other laps with uphill stretches but none comes close to the Baguio lap, which combines daredevil riding and tough climbing skills to conquer.

Set for April 2 over close to 200 kms, the 84 riders will be flagged off from the Burnham Park, go down through Marcos Highway then return to Baguio through Naguilian. After going down Marcos Highway a second time, the field heads back to the finish at Burnham through the punishing Kennon Road.

In last year's revival race, the San Fernando, La Union-Baguio run, but Tour organizers decided to put the dreaded stage back as the biker's signature lap.

Previous bikathon stages had the Baguio-to-Baguio as the ultimate bikathon test with the overall leader after the lap eventually finishing as champion.

The Bitukang Manok stretch between Naga City and Daet, Camarines Norte during the March 19 second stage will be the first climbing test for this year's Tour. Another uphill stretch on what is known as the Tatlong M in Atimonan, Quezon awaits the field the next day.

Fash, Welcoat break tie in vital Game 3

SCHEDULE TODAY (Pasig Sports Center)
3 p.m.—PBL Awards
4 p.m.—Fash vs Welcoat (Game 3)

GAME 1—Welcoat 78, Fash 60
GAME 2—Fash 84, Welcoat 80 2OT

WITH the momentum suddenly on its side, Fash Dishwashing attempts to gain the upperhand against Welcoat Paints when they clash in today's Game 3 of the PBL Platinum Cup title playoffs at the Pasig Sports Center.

The Liquid Power tied the best-of-five series by scoring a hard-earned, double-overtime 84-80 victory in Game 2 last Saturday which showcased their big fighting hearts and determination.

"That's reason enough for us to believe we can win this title and for them (Welcoat) to stop taking us lightly," said Fash coach Junel Baculi, who kept on believing in his wards even after Welcoat's 78-60 rout in Game 1.

But Welcoat, whose pro-bound starters were cheered by the Purefoods stars in Game 2, is determined to turn the tables around.

"We noticed that Game 2 was a very physical game," said Welcoat coach Leo Austria. "I think

we have to match that physicality so expect an even more emotional game tomorrow."

Game 3 is set at 4 p.m. right after League honors the tournament's Most Valuable Player and the season's other top performers. Welcoat stars James Yap and Jerceles Tangkay are battling it out for the MVP plum.

A big thorn on the side of Welcoat is Peter June Simon, the 6-foot-1 Purefoods recruit, who scored 26 points in Game 2 by shooting 9-of-13 from the field, including 3-of-4 from the three-point lane.

The 21-year-old Simon, who hails from North Cotabato and a management graduate of the University of Mindanao in Davao, also had three rebounds and six assists aside from playing the lead role in the second overtime after Rich Alvarez had fouled out.

Simon snagged a one-year, nine-month contract with Purefoods, which guaranteed him a salary of P80,000 and P120,000 in the first and second year, respectively.

Ironically, the Paint Masters, who got lengthy, multimillion-peso pro contracts from the Hotdogs—Yap, Irvin Sotto and Paul Artadi—were non-factors in Game 2.

Yap could only score 10 points—none in the second overtime. Sotto managed to contribute five, while Artadi had six. Marc Anthony Reyes



SIMON of Fash drives past Marc Pingris in Game One. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

Barcelona heads PBBL 2004 cast

PHILIPPINE junior bantamweight champion Eric Barcelona heads the stellar cast of the 2004 Philippine Pro-Boxing League (PPBL) season.

Barcelona, a protégé of Leonel Lazarito from Cagayan de Oro City, sports a record of 26 wins, 5 losses, with 9 KOs.

Last November, Barcelona beat Sherwin Paro for the vacant junior bantamweight crown.

This time, Barcelona will be challenged by 15 other ranked fighters for the 2004 PPBL junior bantamweight championship.

Blocking Barcelona's path into the grueling tournament is RP No. 2 Paro of SGA stable who is raring to exact revenge.

Joining them are RP No. 3 Franklin Makalibo of L&M Gym, No. 6 Roselito Campana, VPBA No. 4

Ronnie Canete of SGA stable, RP No. 7 Mark Sales of Ben Mejia stable, No. 9 Sukarno Banjao of Bebot Elorde stable, No. 10 Carlo Jayme of Aljo Jaro stable, PBF No. 8 Albert Cesa of Dante Almario stable, PBF No. 9 Jimboy Rodriguez of Buboy Fernandez stable, PBF No. 12 Allan Fuentes of J. San Pedro stable, PBF No. 16 Michael Agapay, Marvin Gumban of Wakee Salud stable and Tata Polinar

and Jun Magsipoc of Yolly Alfante stable.

Seen every Wednesday at 9 p.m. on IBC-13, the PPBL uses a knockout system where only the victors advance to the latter stages of the tournament.

The last two men standing after the initial three 10-round stages move up to fight in the championship in May.

Mat's gambit

SPECTATOR



Al S. Mendoza

I CAN only hope that everything's well with Mat Defensor and the National Chess Federation of the Philippines. The papers have reported that Mat has patched up the differences between Eugene Torre/Sammy Estimo and Joey Antonio/Bong Villamayor.

However, I wonder what differences Mat had actually patched up.

First, Antonio and Villamayor had accused Estimo, the NCFP secretary general, of mismanagement.

How did Mat fix that? By making Joey and Bong agree that they were just joking?

How did Mat mend Sammy's broken, if not wounded, heart? By making Sammy agree that "to err is human, to forgive is divine?"

How did Mat appease Eugene's pride? It will be recalled that Joey and Bong had accused Eugene of conspiring with Mark Paragua to corner a one-on-one million-peso duel without regard for the interests of grandmasters like Joey and Bong (Paragua is an IM). By making Eugene agree to "forgive and forget in the name of peace and reconciliation?"

And was Mat's act of appointing Casto "Toti" Abundo NCFP executive director the final solution to the problem?

From what I know, the executive director runs the day-to-day affairs of the NCFP. That's the same position that Jake Ayson holds at the National Golf Association of the Philippines. Which means, that is not a totally powerful position in that it does not empower the position holder to make major decisions for the association. That power belongs to the secretary general, who happens to be, in the case of the NCFP, Sammy Estimo (his NGAP counterpart is Benny Gopez).

In short, since Mat did not fire Sammy, an act that Mat could not actually do in the absence of a board decision, then it follows that

Sammy remains the top gun of the NCFP and thus effectively makes Toti as his mere subaltern. Meaning, by both operation of the NCFP's charter and definition of their duties, Toti takes orders from Sammy. So, where does that put Mat's supposed solution to the chess imbroglio that hogged headlines for days?

Toti is in, yes, but Sammy, from all indications, still runs the show if we go by what the NCFP provisions say.

Joey and Bong will heed Toti but not Sammy?

I am really confused.

The papers said Toti's appointment would empower him to patch up the "differences between the country's top players." If that was what Mat wanted Toti to do, Mat did not have to appoint Toti to the position. A mere presidential memo to that effect would have sufficed. Toti would assemble the whining parties, offer them coffee, give them a piece of his mind and, voila, it's done.

Toti is a very busy man. He is the present manager of the Fide offices in Russia, a Fide executive board member and the Fide ratings administrator. He can't possibly attend to an 8-to-5 job at the NCFP with the diligence of a full-time employee. And for a fee of one peso a year?

C'mon, whose leg are you trying to pull, felas?

I heard the guy Toti replaced, international arbiter Gene Poliarco, is hurting.

Oh, well, the things some people do just to copy MacGyver, TV's Mr. Band-Aid solutions.

I just hope Mat's move to appoint Toti to replace Gene did not violate provisions of the NCFP charter. Otherwise, chess could be in a rut deeper than what a grandmaster would find himself in with a single miscalculation.

FASTBREAK. If you believe in the First Quadrant, stop reading this. I was recently given a paper purportedly showing that the First Quadrant was the 2002 National Consumer Choice Award in the "Who's Who in the Philippines Awards and the National Consumer Affairs Foundation." It was cited as the "Top Multi-Level Marketing Company of the Year" at the 19th Annual Year-ender Consumers Excellence & Rizal Day Memorial Awards held at the AFP Theater, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City. The officers listed for the affair were Jonathan N. Navea, Gov. Justo M. Ortiz, Celia A. Umali, Dean Amelia P. Mapaga and Jennifer P. Saavedra. President Macapagal Arroyo was listed as the Honorary Presenter. My colleague Mon Tulfo and his brother Raffy have written in their columns that the First Quadrant "is not involved in pyramid scheme." Some basketball players have asked me about the First Quadrant, whose president in 2002 was Rhodora Tacatacan-Tumpalan. Sorry, but I know about the First Quadrant is it gives you back P2,000 of your P8,000 investment to the company; the P2,000 you receive they call it "your shopping money." If you want to know more about the First Quadrant, please inquire from its offices at 808, 8th Floor The Taipan Place, Emerald Ave., Ortigas Business District, Pasig City, tel. 687-5331/687-5324 (www.firstquadrant.org).

Batangas hosts Asian F3 starting April 24

THE BIGGEST car racing event ever to hit the country flags off on April 24 when the first of six legs of the Asian Formula 3 Championship is held at the Batangas Racing Circuit.

The Philippines and China host three legs each of the prestigious event aimed at producing local drivers who could make it to the elite Formula One.

Asian Formula 3 Corp. chair Jose Eduardo Peña, chief organizer of the event, said the AF3 offers an opportunity to the local riders to pursue their dreams of becoming the first Filipino to make it to the Formula One race.

Since its inception in 2000, Peña said Philippine tracks have been spruced up to meet international F3

standards, with the Batangas Racing Circuit and the Subic International Raceways given the green light to host three legs of the AF3.

"Formula 3 was professionalized to meet international standards and we can say, after three years of hard labor, that we have met most criteria so that the Philippines can also become a car racing haven in Asia and the Pacific," Peña said.

After the first races in Batangas, Subic takes its turn in hosting the second leg on May 29-30, before the races are moved to China with stops scheduled in Beijing (July 17-18), Zhuhai (Sept. 11-12), and Shanghai (Oct. 23-24). The final races go back to Batangas on Dec. 4-5.

Aguilar, Marave, Bumgarner lead Golden Wheel awardees

ASIAN motocross champion Glenn Aguilar, Asian Formula 3 titleholder Pepon Marave and karter Michelle Bumgarner head the roster of last year's best drivers and riders to be feted today during the Golden Wheel Awards Night at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium of the RCBC Tower in Makati City.

The Golden Wheel Foundation, composed of heads of different motorsports disciplines, will

also honor the top performers in scooter, superbikes, karting, slalom, rallying, 4x4 racing and Formula Toyota.

Sen. Robert Barbers has been invited to be the guest of honor and speaker of the awards night.

The Motorsports Rider of the Year and the Hall of Fame Award will also be named from among the winners in each of the 12 racing categories.

O'Neal hits Stern after Lakers win

TORONTO—Shaquille O'Neal is facing a possible fine after a profanity-laced tirade directed at NBA commissioner David Stern following the Los Angeles Lakers' 84-83 victory on Sunday over the Toronto Raptors.

"My message to David Stern is get some people in here that understand the game," said O'Neal, who made 10-of-15 freethrows. "And don't try to take over the (expletive) game."

O'Neal scored 36 points as the Lakers kicked off a seven-game road trip—their longest since 1991-92.

The 7-foot-1 O'Neal, who missed 12 games last month with a calf injury, was frustrated by Toronto's physical play and criticized the officials after the game.

"People pay good money to see good athletes play. Let us go out there and play the (expletive) game. Don't be try-

ing to take over the game," O'Neal said. Playing without injured stars Kobe Bryant and Karl Malone, the Lakers nearly squandered a 16-point lead but benefited from a questionable non-call in the final seconds.

Toronto's Vince Carter drove the lane between Gary Payton and Rick Fox, appeared to be held by Payton and attempted a shot, thinking he was fouled.

But referee Luis Grillo did not blow his whistle. O'Neal grabbed the rebound and fed a long pass to Payton, who ran out the final two seconds rather than attempt a layup.

Carter had 27 points and 10 rebounds for the Raptors (21-24), who dropped to 1-7 all-time at home against the Lakers and fell three games under .500 for the first time this season. Carter's 3-pointer made it 84-83 with 48 seconds left. **AFP**

Complete results: LA Lakers 84, Toronto 83, Cleveland 104, Washington 100, Minnesota 106, Philadelphia 101



RAPTORS' Morris Peterson hits the floor as he chases a loose ball during NBA action against the Lakers.

Kaye snares Phoenix tilt by 2 strokes

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona—Jonathan Kaye produced an error-free back nine to win the \$4-million Phoenix Open by two strokes from Chris DiMarco on Sunday.

With a closing 4-under-par 67, Phoenix resident Kaye finished 18-under on 266 to claim the first prize of \$936,000 and win his second PGA Tour title.

Steve Flesch (66) and Vijay Singh (66) tied for third on 269. The world number two from Fiji has now finished in the top 10 in 11 consecutive PGA Tour events, three short of Jack Nicklaus' record.

Duffy Waldorf (65) and Canada's Mike Weir (69) shared fifth on 271.

Phil Mickelson (72), who at one stage was in a three-way tie for the lead with Kaye and DiMarco (69), faded badly by bogeying four of the last five holes. He finished joint seventh with Scott Verplank on 272.

"This one feels a little better than the first one (last year's Buick Classic)," Kaye, 33, told reporters. "It's kind of hard to believe but it's just nice being in front of friends and family and getting to share it with them."

The tournament developed into a three-way contest between Kaye, DiMarco and Mickelson. But after all three birdied the par-five 13th and were tied on 15-under, Mickelson and then DiMarco fell away.

Mickelson's fall was swift while DiMarco's demise came at the par-three 16th, in front of thousands of raucous fans. **Reuters**

Canadian run avalanche buries hapless Blu Boys

RESULTS—Canada d. Australia, 3-2; Venezuela d. Netherlands, 3-2; Botswana d. Hong Kong, 8-1; Japan d. Argentina, 1-0; Canada d. Philippines, 8-0; Samoa d. Venezuela, 7-4; Australia d. South Africa, 7-4; New Zealand vs Netherlands, Japan vs USA (playing at presstime)

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand—It took former world champion Canada just five innings to put away an overmatched Philippine side, 8-0, as it enhanced its quarterfinals bid with two victories in the XI men's world softball championship at the Smoke-free Ballpark here Monday.

Stunned by newcomer Samoa Sunday, the Canadians repulsed pitcher Andrew Kirkpatrick and Australia for a 3-2 win earlier then dominated the Blu Boys and dealt the Filipinos their third straight setback be-

hind the seven-run mercy rule.

Canada, winner of the Manila editions of softball's World Series in 1972 and 1992 and joint gold medalist in 1976, fielded in the legendary Darren Zack, who limited the Filipinos to only two hits. The veteran Zack, a member of the 1992 world champs who had records of pitching 10 games without allowing a single run and 150 strikeouts, claimed eight strikeouts against 17 Filipino batters he faced.

That loss sent the Blu Boys to the brink of eliminations in tough Pool A, the championship's version of the Group of Death. The team faces an almost impossible task of winning four games beginning with South Africa at 9 a.m. and defending champion New Zealand at 5 p.m. Tuesday.

"We've been left behind in this kind of

Linescores	R	H	E
Canada 140 03x x	8	8	3
RP 000 00x x	0	2	1

D. Zack (w) C. Crawford R. Rojas (L) 4, S/J Acuna, M. Ramirez and J. Cabrera, I. Abello

competition," admitted Manzanares, noting the vast improvement of teams.

National coach Reynaldo Manzanares used all three pitchers in the RP rotation against Canada's explosive row of eight left-handed batters and shuffled 12 men in a frantic search for the right mix. But the former champs proved to be just too much for the Blu Boys.

Zamboanga's Roger Rojas took his second loss in as many outings, issuing five of their rivals' eight hits in four innings.

With their hopes of making the quarterfinals dashed by successive setbacks, the Blu Boys would need three big wins in their last four games to match their joint ninth place finish four years ago in South Africa.

But that, too, appears to be too tough a job for the Filipinos considering the caliber of teams in their bracket. Australia returned in the afternoon to beat South Africa, 7-2, and Venezuela improved to 2-1 win-loss with a 3-2 decision over the Netherlands.

The Canadians came through with four runs—two unearned—on the top of the second inning and simply pulled away.

Unlike in their loss to Venezuela, the Blu Boys had only an error to show this time but they still groped for form offensively

and fumbled their only two scoring threats.

Mark Rae Ramirez, the Asian series Most Valuable Player, came up with a three-base hit to centerfield in the second. But with two outs, Zack promptly defused the threat by striking out designated hitter Romeo Bumagat in four pitches.

The Blu Boys had another offensive bid in the fourth inning after Apolonio Rosales hit a hard grounder to shortstop Chris Jones. World series veteran Fidel Moncera then drilled a line drive to right field and looked as if he had pulled off a single as Jody Eidt took a diving catch.

But base umpire Wayne Synders ruled a caught fly ball and Rosales was out on a double play rounding second base.

"Even the breaks and judgment calls go against us," said Manzanares.

SPORTSWATCH

Albans of Surigao cop 3 Milo titles

BUTUAN CITY—Juv Alban whipped Iligan's Nic Fernandez, 6-1, 6-3, Sunday to bag the boys' 18-under title while younger brother Juke Alban seized two crowns to highlight Surigao City's domination of the 2004 Milo Junior Tennis Cup and Regional Workshop at the Luz Village Tennis Club here. Juv and Juke shared the limelight with Bryan Saarens in the unisex 10-under, Rorlgen Iducos in the boys' 12-under, Honeymae Gilles in the girls' 12- and 14-under, and Irene Serito in the girls' 16- and 18-under categories. On hand to award the trophies to the winners of the CTW-organized nestfest, which celebrates the 40 years of Milo in the Philippines, was club VP Mario Novales. Juke turned back Noelito Pacan, 6-2, 6-4, in the boys' 14-under and downed Pacan again, 6-0, 6-1, in the boys' 16-under final; Saarens routed Kathleen Uy, 6-3, 6-2 and Nikki de Dios, 6-3, 6-1; Serito beat Alana Ursal, 6-3, 6-2, and then stopped Joan Miñozza, 6-1, 6-2. The championships were supported by Wilson balls, adidas and Sports Kids.

Roligon 7-cocker features 100 fights

ROLIGON Mega Cockpit's 14th Anniversary 7-Cock Derby resumes early today with more than 100 fights featuring the second batch of participants. The six-day event kicked off last Saturday with a total of 115 fights. Roligon owner and derby host Rolly Ligon is staking P3.6 million for an entry fee of P11,000. Early favorites include the entries of last year's Cavite International 7-Cock champion Madison Go, as well as those of Bobby del Rosario, Francis Lumunsad, Serge Capistrano, Tony Lasala, Maj. Bobby Doromal, Ricky Castillo of Lakpue Drug, Dicky Lim, Abraham Bernales, Benjie Lim, Boy de los Reyes, Nicky Garganta, Mike Romulo, Edmund Yasay and Jojo Bacar, among others. Eight cockers gained finals berths on Feb. 12 after posting three victories each last Saturday. They were tabloid executives Rey Briones, Allan Siaco, Josphel Chuazon of Bulacan, Bro Ed, Jojo Bacar, Nonoy Gonzales of Laguna, Gerry Perez and RGEF Ilarde. For inquiries, call 852-9812, 852-9774, 833-2275, 833-1638 and 0920-3074225.

Yu derby in Pasay lures 50 entries

AT LEAST 50 entries are seeing action in a P300,000 4-cock derby hosted by promoter Bobot Yu on March 10 at the air-conditioned Pasay City Cockpit. Entry fee in the derby hosted by Sagupaan Hammer, Sagupaan Mite Free, Sagupaan B-50 Forten and Sagupaan Complexor 3000 is P8,800, with the minimum bet set at P5,500. The derby starts at 2 p.m. Participants are reminded to submit their entries on March 9, from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. For inquiries, call 816-6750, 843-1746 and 843-1890. Fifty-eight entries vied in Yu's 4-cock derby promotion last Dec. 16 at the La Loma Cockpit. Meanwhile, the "Big Fight Sa Pasay 5-Cock Derby" fires off this Friday, with pit manager Eric de la Rosa and Louie Cua as hosts.



IN MEMORIAM: Marita Monsod-Alegre (center), assisted by her son Ricky, receives a posthumous award for her other son, Peter Alegre, from Gerald Arce (right) of Patok during the PSA Awards Night last Jan. 9 at the Manila Pavilion. Peter wrote for the Times Journal.

Patriots top Super Bowl

HOUSTON—Adam Vinatieri kicked a late 41-yard field goal to earn the New England Patriots a thrilling 32-29 win over the Carolina Panthers Sunday, their second Super Bowl title in three seasons.

Vinatieri, who booked the winning effort with no time on the clock when the Patriots defeated the St. Louis Rams in Super Bowl XXXVI two years ago, drove the ball through the uprights with four seconds left to break Carolina hearts.

One of the NFL's most reliable kickers, Vinatieri had struggled through an unusually difficult day, shanking a 31-yard attempt wide in the first quarter and having another 36-yard effort blocked in the second.

But the 31-year-old made no mistake on his third attempt as thousands of flashbulbs went off around a sellout Reliant Stadium, the fans on the edge of their seats after a wild fourth quarter.

"I was fortunate, I just looked up and it was going down the middle," Vinatieri told reporters. "You just try to block the external things out and kick it."

"I've said it before, most guys never have the opportunity to play in this game and to have two opportunities to win it is amazing." "If you've got one kick with everything on the

PATRIOTS wide receiver David Givens (87) leaps to bring in a Brady pass for the Patriots' second touchdown in the first half of Super Bowl XXXVIII. Panthers cornerback Ricky Manning defends at left.



line, he's got one kick in him," said Patriots coach Bill Belichick. "It was a great kick, an awesome kick."

The MVP in New England's Super Bowl win over the Rams, quarterback Tom Brady turned in another sparkling MVP award-winning performance, completing 32 of 48 passes for 354 yards and three touchdowns against a ferocious Panthers defense.

Having spent the entire two-week buildup to Super Bowl XXXVIII being compared to the brilliant Joe Montana of the San Francisco 49ers, Brady lived up to his billing and is now a perfect 6-0 in postseason games.

It was the 15th straight victory for the Patriots, the second longest winning run in NFL history behind only the 1972 Miami Dolphins, winners of 17 in a row. **Reuters**

INTERSCHOLASTICS GOLF

Ateneo-La Salle rivalry up

THE FABLED rivalry between Ateneo and La Salle comes into focus again as both schools take aim at a three-division sweep in the boys' division in the second Samsung Interscholastics golf championships kicking off today at the Legends course of the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club in Carmona, Cavite.

Ateneo and La Salle are fielding power-packed teams in the college, high school and elementary levels in the championships which lured 27 top schools from Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

Poveda, St. Benedict and Colegio de San Agustin are also tipped to crowd the favorites in the grade school level, while Elizabeth Setton and OB Montessori are out to challenge the big guns in the high school play of the 54-hole tourney principally backed by electronics giant Samsung.

Brent International School Manila and Miriam College are among the newcomers.

The tourney has drawn the major support of

Manila Southwoods, with co-sponsors Tokyo Tokyo, Gatorade, Rogin-E, Dunlop Golf, Rudy Project, Custom Clubmakers and Wilson. Radio stations Killer-Bee, Jam 88.3, Wave 89.1, Magic 89.9, 99.5 RT and 103.5 K-Lite are media partners.

Preceding the 8 a.m. tee-off is the hitting of ceremonial balls by former President Fidel V. Ramos, Korean Ambassador Son Sang Ha, Samsung president Sang Youl Eom, Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain, Freddie Mendoza of Southwoods and Jungolf president Luigi Tabuena.

Boy Blue Ocampo of the organizing Professional Sports Management Group said the big number of 142 players in the roster represents a 30-percent jump in participation compared to last year.

"We will keep on encouraging schools to give young golfers all the support they need, which is the only way to breed better golfers for the national team and even for the professional ranks," said Ocampo.

Tan-Tinio puts Pagunsan, other big guns in shade

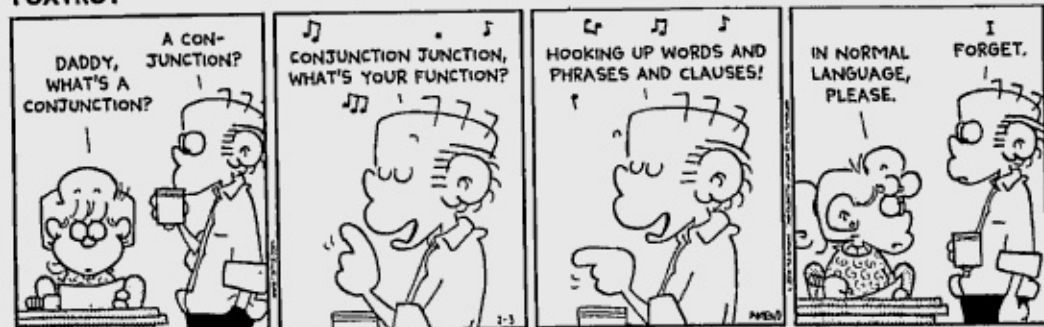
JOAQUIN Tan and partner Manuel Tinio combined for 158 points to bag the overall championship in the 26th Jose Yulo memorial golf tournament recently at the north and south courses of the Canlubang golf complex in Laguna.

Tan and Tinio scored 75 points, under the Stableford scoring system, in the first day then added 83 in the next to beat the fancied tandem of Juvic Pagunsan and Mel Alviar by two points in the 36-hole event held in memory of the late former Speaker.

Jun Bernis, who won last week's DHL Amateur Open crown, settled for third with 152 (75-77) in a team-up with James Alviar.

Other winners: Abe Rosal-Bones Florio, 293 points (team overall low gross); Santiago Santos-Atab Rivera, 81, Dante Dato-Telesforo Gana, 77 (low net-north course); Joey Quimzon-Zaldy Villa, 82, Tibs Carandang-Willie Landayan, 79, (low net-south course); Norberto Tolentino, 84, and Lucy Landicho, 145 (individual low gross).

FOXTROT



BY BILL AMEND A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA



MARVIN



BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY



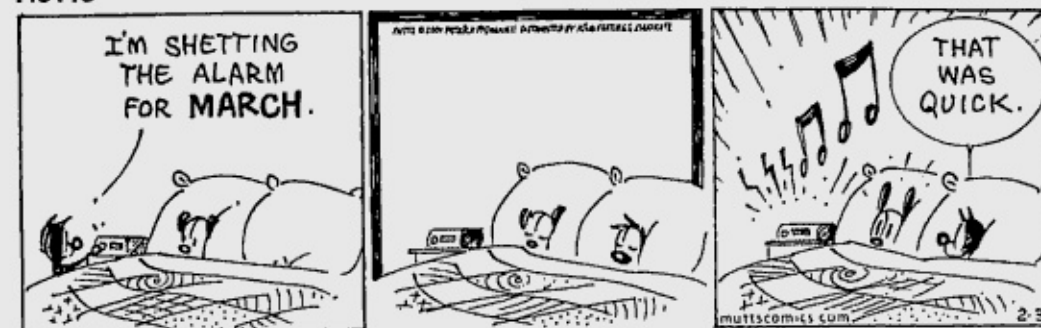
BY P.M. JUNIOR

BABY BLUES



BY JERRY SCOTT

MUTTS



BY PATRICK McDONNELL

ATOMO AND WEBOY



BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY



BY STEVEN PABALINAS

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Many of you are technical perfectionists. You strive to do something well. Details do not daunt you. You are original in thought and speech, and because of this, others find you immensely entertaining. You research anything you pursue. You are also realistic about your abilities. The year ahead focuses on your closest relationships and partnerships.

Birthdate of: James Michener, writer; Blythe Danner, actress; Nathan Lane, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You want to spend money on something to show people who you really are. You have an urge to feel proud about something special that you want to buy.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): With Mars in your sign, you now feel empowered! In fact, in the next few weeks, you'll be so bold and assertive, you might want to get extra exercise to burn off some of this energy.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You'll have to watch your knee-jerk reactions starting now and for the next few weeks. Old habit patterns might no longer serve your best interests. (Use caution.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Physical activity with groups and friends will please you now. Be patient with a friend who disappoints or irks you. (After all, keep the friendship.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Your ambition is aroused! You want to make a name for yourself now. Fortunately, somebody is around who's going to help you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You want to get better organized so that you can make plans to take a trip somewhere. You also want to get organized because you want to take courses and get advanced training. Excellent.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You feel passionate and sexy lately! Your romantic urges are aroused. (New love that begins now will definitely be memorable.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You'll have to be patient with partners right now. Don't fall into a pattern of being critical. Doubt and criticism are the enemies of harmony and happiness.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're busy, and you're hustling! You've got a full schedule, but fortunately, you're prepared to work hard now. Expect to accomplish a lot today and in the weeks ahead.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're in the mood for play, fun and romance. Not only that, you're ready to shell out some money to have these good times. (Why not?)

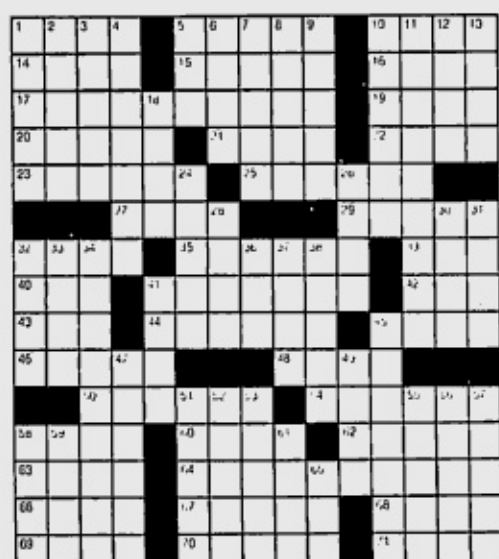
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Changes due to renovations, redecorating or moving create chaos at home. Visiting guests might also upset your schedule. Just be patient. Others appreciate your tolerance.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your desire to get others to agree with you now could land you in hot water. Go gently. State your case, and leave it at that. Generally speaking, a good idea will sell itself.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Arctic Circle dweller
- 5 Panoramic view
- 10 Geometry calculation
- 14 Wheels support
- 15 Wastes time
- 16 Fossil fuel
- 17 Wise guy
- 19 Weightlifting exercise
- 20 Have an inkling
- 21 Parched
- 22 Repulsive
- 23 Tip or Eugene
- 25 Brunch pastry
- 27 Did in
- 29 Park perch
- 32 Obligation
- 35 Hair-care product
- 39 Actor Wallach
- 40 Architectural add-on
- 41 Beet soup
- 42 Foldaway bed
- 43 Chairman
- 44 Create a soft spot?
- 45 The ___ the limit!
- 46 Andes people
- 48 Boom's counterpart
- 50 Hershey's candies
- 54 Andre and Goliath
- 58 Quantum theorist Niels
- 60 Eye amorously
- 62 Tease coyly
- 63 Parroted
- 64 Professional investigator
- 66 Tolerate
- 67 Macho types
- 68 Garbage boat
- 69 Rooney of "60 Minutes"
- 70 Strict
- 71 Sawbucks

By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MD

2/3/04

Monday's Puzzle Solved

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3/2/04

DOWN

- 1 Roper's rope
- 2 Lumberjacks
- 3 Tool for evening

- 4 Keep on trying
- 5 Exuberance
- 6 Altar vows
- 7 Fish-tailed
- 8 Aquarium fish
- 9 Pallid
- 10 Point a finger at
- 11 Oil-rig roustabout
- 12 Jimmy Carter's middle name
- 13 Pact participant
- 18 Legendary archer
- 24 Clunker
- 26 Yeah, sure
- 28 Gentlemen's agreement
- 30 Surfeit
- 31 Chart toppers
- 32 Actress Moore
- 33 Panache
- 34 Ignoramus
- 36 Put to work
- 37 Wound covering
- 38 Indicate indifference
- 41 Mrs. Truman

- 45 Most hackneyed
- 47 Hang on the clothesline
- 49 Sort through
- 51 Last year's froth
- 52 Plumed wader
- 53 Snail trail
- 55 Sister's kid
- 56 Don in the fitting room
- 57 Goulash and ragout
- 58 Rum cake
- 59 Candid
- 61 At any time
- 65 Novelist Beattie

BEN



BY DANIEL SHELTON

MIKROKOSMOS



BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

KIKO MACHINE



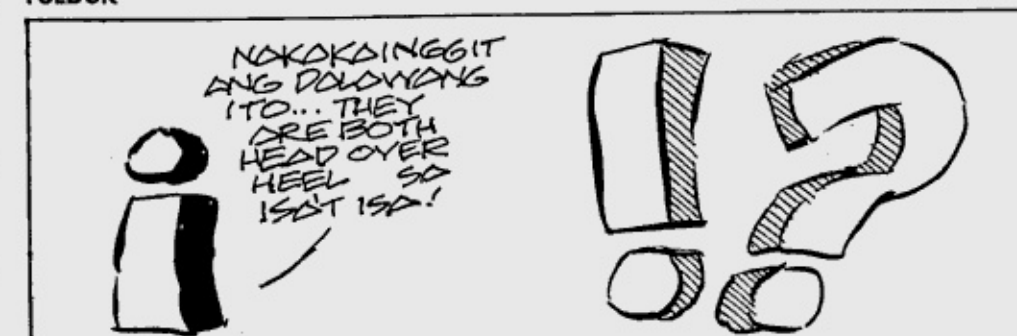
BY MANIX ABRERA

LOVEKNOTS



BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

TULDOK



BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

A21

Starstruck success

From page A24

our soaps," he said. "It was just enough, but it was a budget very well-spent."

At the Araneta Coliseum, the show's production values were also high.

Yasmien and Jennylyn performed with GMA-7's high-caliber talents like Regine Velasquez, Jaya and Lani Misalucha. Mark and Rainier danced with the Sexbomb Dancers.

Kids' turn

Many in the audience and members of the entertainment press, including some GMA 7 people, preferred these two teenage boys to win since they had far more charisma and drawing power than the two girls combined. But "Starstruck" rules specified that the title should be given to only one boy and one girl. Jennylyn took home the prize.

Success breeds another "Starstruck," but this time, for children aged 5 to 7 years old. "Starstruck Kids" will be launched in March.

Fanny Serrano in mall beauty tour

JOIN beauty expert Fanny Serrano in a unique beauty experience.

Fanny will be touring key cities in the Philippines to meet his consumers and offer his expertise on beauty. Meet Fanny on these dates and places:

Feb. 7—SM Manila-YMCA, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 8—SM Megamall-B, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 14—SM North Edsa, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 15—SM Cubao, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 21—Robinson's Ermita, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 22—Robinson's Galleria, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 28—SM Fairview, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 29—SM Sta. Mesa, 2:30 p.m.

March 6—SM Makati, 2:30 p.m.

March 7—Landmark, Makati, 2:30 p.m.

March 20—SM Cebu, 2:30 p.m.

March 21—Metro Ayala Cebu, 2:30 p.m.

March 23—SM Davao, 2:30 p.m.

March 28—SM Cagayan D/S, 2:30 p.m.

April 3—SM Bacoor, 2:30 p.m.

April 17, 2004—SM Marilao, 2:30 p.m.

April 24—SM Pampanga, 2:30 p.m.

May 2—SM Las Piñas, 2:30 p.m.

The beauty tour is part of Fanny's promotional activities for his new line of cosmetics.

Fanny Serrano Cosmetics is now very much in demand in the world of fashion and beauty.

Leading society figures, celebrities, models, as well as make-up artists, are clamoring for the make-up line.



NOW SHOWING

CITY NORTH EDSA 523452	STA. MESA 714552 • 714116	MEGAMALL 633100 • 633001
1. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	1. BROTHER BEAR	1. LAST SAMURAI RESERVE A SEAT 6:01 631000
2. KILL BILL VOLUME 1	2. PURI	2. KILL BILL VOLUME 1
3. DIABLO	3. LAST SAMURAI	3. SKY OF LOVE
4. TWINS EFFECT	4. HAUNTED OFFICE	4. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
5. BROTHER BEAR	5. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	5. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
6. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS	6. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS	6. TWINS EFFECT
7. LAST SAMURAI	7. DIABLO	7. BROTHER BEAR
8. STUCK ON YOU	8. KILL BILL VOLUME 1	8. HAUNTED OFFICE
	9. STUCK ON YOU	9. STUCK ON YOU
	10. TWINS EFFECT	10. LAST SAMURAI
		11. DIABLO
		12. PURI
CITY CEBU 231351	SOUTHMALL 695055	CINEMA TUTUBAN 251433
1. THE SUSPECT	1. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS	1. LAST SAMURAI
2. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	2. KILL BILL VOLUME 1	2. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
3. KILL BILL VOLUME 1	3. LAST SAMURAI	3. DIABLO
4. CABIN FEVER	4. BROTHER BEAR	4. STUCK ON YOU
5. SKY OF LOVE	5. PURI	
6. PURI	6. TWINS EFFECT	
7. THE GATHERING	7. STUCK ON YOU	
8. LAST SAMURAI	8. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	
	9. BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR	
	10. DIABLO	
CITY BACOR	CITY FAIRVIEW	CITY ILOILO
1. DIABLO	1. HAUNTED OFFICE	1. MYSTIC RIVER
2. STUCK ON YOU	2. PURI	2. RESERVED
3. LAST SAMURAI	3. SCARY MOVIE 3	3. LAST SAMURAI
4. BROTHER BEAR	4. LAST SAMURAI	4. INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
5. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	5. STUCK ON YOU	5. KILL BILL VOLUME 1
6. KILL BILL VOLUME 1	6. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS	6. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
7. PURI	7. BROTHER BEAR	7. RESERVED
8. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS	8. KILL BILL VOLUME 1	8. THE GRUDGE
	9. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	
	10. LIBERATED	
	11. TWINS EFFECT	
	12. DIABLO	
CITY PAMPANGA	CITY DAVAO	CITY MANILA
1. LAST SAMURAI	1. LAST SAMURAI	1. STUCK ON YOU
2. LOST ISLAND	2. CABIN FEVER	2. LAST SAMURAI
3. ELF	3. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	3. HAUNTED OFFICE
4. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	4. THE GRUDGE	4. BROTHER BEAR
5. MEMENTO MORI	5. INTOLERABLE CRUELTY	5. KILL BILL VOLUME 1
6. BROTHER BEAR	6. KILL BILL VOLUME 1	6. LAST SAMURAI
		7. TWINS EFFECT
		8. BRIDAL SHOWER
		9. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
		10. DIABLO
		11. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
		12. MEMENTO MORI
SUPER CTR. SUCAT	CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO	CITY BAGUIO
1. STUCK ON YOU	1. KILL BILL VOLUME 1	1. LAST SAMURAI
2. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	2. INTOLERABLE CRUELTY	2. THE WISHER
3. LAST SAMURAI	3. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	3. MYSTIC RIVER
4. BROTHER BEAR	4. SCARY MOVIE 3	4. TWINS EFFECT
BICUTAN	CITY LUCENA	
1. LAST SAMURAI	1. MYSTIC RIVER	
2. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS	2. LIBERATED	
3. STUCK ON YOU	3. BRIDAL SHOWER	
4. BROTHER BEAR	4. LOST ISLAND	
CITY MARILAO		
1. LAST SAMURAI		
2. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING		
3. MEMENTO MORI		
4. BROTHER BEAR		

THE PODIUM

18 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City • 638 9781 • 85



1. STUCK ON YOU
12:10 FS/12:40 MF/3:15/5:50/8:25/10:30 LFS/11:00 LMF/1:05 END



2. BROTHER BEAR
12:25 FS/12:55 MF/2:50/4:45/10:00 LFS/10:30 LMF/11:55 END

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THE LAST SAMURAI 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30	
KILL BILL 11:30, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9:50 DOLBY DIGITAL	DIABLO 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50 DTS
STUCK ON YOU 11:30, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9:50 DOLBY DIGITAL	THE LAST SAMURAI 10:15, 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00 SDDS
LOTR 3 10:20, 2:05, 5:55, 9:45 DOLBY DIGITAL	A TALE OF TWO SISTERS 11:45, 2:15, 4:45, 7:15, 9:45 DOLBY DIGITAL
	INTOLERABLE CRUELTY 12:05, 2:00, 3:55, 5:50, 7:45, 9:40

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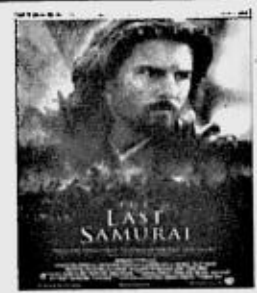
ERMITA 526-7185 / 536-7809 to 12	CINEMA 1 THX
THE LAST SAMURAI 10:10, 1:10, 4:10, 7:10, 10:00	
KILL BILL 11:30, 1:40, 3:50, 6:00, 8:10, 10:00 DOLBY DIGITAL	LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING 10:40, 2:20, 6:00, 10:00 DOLBY DIGITAL
STUCK ON YOU 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50 DOLBY DIGITAL	DIABLO 11:30, 1:40, 3:50, 6:00, 8:10, 10:00 SDDS
	BROTHER BEAR 10:40, 12:40, 2:40, 4:40, 6:40, 8:40, 10:00 DOLBY DIGITAL
	A TALE OF TWO SISTERS 11:30, 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:40 DTS

Big R Supercenter METRO EAST 682-8193/99 / 682-8280	Big R Supercenter NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW 935-3229 / 31
1. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS 11:20, 1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 9:00 DOLBY DIGITAL	2. STUCK ON YOU 11:20, 1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 9:00 DOLBY DIGITAL
DIABLO 10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00 DOLBY DIGITAL	BROTHER BEAR 10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00 DOLBY DIGITAL
STUCK ON YOU 11:30, 1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 9:00 DOLBY DIGITAL	LORD OF THE RINGS THE RETURN OF THE KING 10:30, 12:50, 4:50, 9:00 DOLBY DIGITAL
	MEMENTO MORI 11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00 DOLBY DIGITAL
	THE LAST SAMURAI 11:50, 2:50, 5:50, 9:00 DOLBY DIGITAL

Big R Supercenter MALABON 288-0985/2575	Big R Supercenter CAINTA 240-4661	Big R Supercenter STA. ROSA Laguna (049) 837-0907
1. BROTHER BEAR	1. THE LAST SAMURAI	1. BROTHER BEAR
2. THE LAST SAMURAI	2. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS	2. LOTR 3
3. DIABLO	3. STUCK ON YOU	3. STUCK ON YOU
4. STUCK ON YOU	4. BROTHER BEAR	4. THE GATHERING
		5. THE LAST SAMURAI
1. LOTR 3	1. MAPUSOK	1. THE LAST SAMURAI
2. LOST ISLAND	2. THE LAST SAMURAI	2. LOTR 3
3. THE LAST SAMURAI	3. BROTHER BEAR	3. BROTHER BEAR
4. MYSTIC RIVER	4. LOTR 3	4. STUCK ON YOU
5. KILL BILL	5. KILL BILL	5. DIABLO
		6. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

Big R Supercenter LIPA 757-3664 / 312-5870	Big R Supercenter DASMARIÑAS 852-2125	Big R Supercenter IMUS 471-8158 / 875-5858
1. LOTR 3	1. MAPUSOK	1. THE LAST SAMURAI
2. LOST ISLAND	2. THE LAST SAMURAI	2. LOTR 3
3. THE LAST SAMURAI	3. BROTHER BEAR	3. BROTHER BEAR
4. MYSTIC RIVER	4. LOTR 3	4. STUCK ON YOU
5. KILL BILL	5. KILL BILL	5. DIABLO
		6. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

Big R Supercenter STARMILLS San Fernando Pampanga 875-1927 / 961-5270	Big R Supercenter BACOLOD 441-0458/59	Big R Supercenter ILOILO 336-8070/78
1. LOTR 3	1. THE LAST SAMURAI	1. KILL BILL
2. BROTHER BEAR	2. KILL BILL	2. MYSTIC RIVER
3. THE GATHERING	3. LOTR 3	3. INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
4. MEMENTO MORI	4. GOOD BOY	4. THE LAST SAMURAI
5. LOST ISLAND	5. LOST ISLAND	5. THE GRUDGE 1
6. THE LAST SAMURAI	6. BRIDAL SHOWER	6. LOTR 3



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KEVIN BACON JENNIFER JASON LEIGH

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A film by Jane Campion

MTRCB PG-13

Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult



Julia Roberts dazzles in 'Mona Lisa Smile'

Ladies, give yourselves a special treat, and bring your sisters, classmates, girlfriends, Mom, or even a date, to see Julia's new movie.

Academy Award®-winner Julia Roberts heads a powerhouse cast with today's hot young Hollywood actresses - Kirsten Dunst (*Spider-Man*) and Julia Stiles (*Save the Last Dance*, *10 Things I Hate About You*) - in an uplifting, heart-wrenching, and often-times funny drama.

Julia Roberts stars as Katherine, a teacher who challenges her bright female students, and discovers herself along the way.

Mike Newell, director of romantic comedy *Four Weddings & a Funeral*, meigs a must-see movie to capture your heart and put a smile on your face.

Warming hearts at a theatre near you
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MTRCB Rating: General Patronage

NOW SHOWING

Kaya mo bang labanan si satanas?

From Julio Fernandez, the king of horror comes the most terrifying movie from Spain.

EVIL RISES FROM THE DEPTHS OF HELL



DIABLO

FROM JULIO FERNANDEZ, THE KING OF HORROR COMES THE MOST TERRIFYING MOVIE FROM SPAIN.

MTRCB R-13

R-13

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Directed by KANG JE-GYU

A22

TUESDAY,
FEBRUARY 3, 2004

Reel...

From page A24

Tita" for Sampaguita Pictures. This will be screened on Feb. 5. Dolphy plays Pancho's sidekick in this sing and dance movie, which also features the late Bayani Casimiro, the country's version of Fred Astaire.

"Hani-Hanimun," produced by Sampaguita Pictures in 1961, was made right after Gloria Romero and Juancho Gutierrez were wed, lending a bit of realism in this happy film. The movie will be shown on Feb. 5.

All Cinema Paraiso activities are free and open to the public. Film showings are from Monday to Friday, 7pm, at the NC-CA's Tanghalang Leandro Locsin.

The exhibit is open for viewing from 12 noon to 7 p.m. also on the same days. For a complete schedule, call Asian Eye at 6872543, or log on

to asianeye.tv/cinemaparaíso.

Just like home

THERE is something in Norah Jones' music that makes one feel at home. It could be her dreamy melodies, the soothing sound of her piano, or the heartfelt lyrics. But Norah's music is able to provide the listener a sense of comfort and well-being that one feels at home.

Her debut album, "Come Away With Me," sold over 7 million copies, won a total of 8 Grammy Awards, and became an instant classic.

For a new taste of Norah's soothing music, get a copy of her new album "Feels Like Home," featuring 13 new songs including seven, which were written by Norah herself or in collaboration with another songwriter.

The album contains Norah's interpretations of songs by Townes Van Zandt ("Be Here To Love Me"), Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan ("The Long Way Home"), and Duke Ellington ("Melancholia"), to which Norah set original lyrics, and renamed "Don't Miss You At All."

Unlike the quiet balladic mood of "Come Away With Me," Norah varies the tempo in her new album to reflect the evolution of her live performances.

"Well, these new songs are all the same tempo too, but we just speeded some of them up, she observes."

The cut "Creepin' In" sees Norah doing a duet with country sensation Dolly Parton. Equally exciting for Norah is the participation of drummer Levon Helm and accordionist Garth Hudson in the song "What Am I To You."

Norah's music is, indeed, like no other. Her soulful singing, together with her beautifully languid music is just about as comfortable as your backyard hammock.

For feedback e-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaith-band.com

Some stars...

From page A24

award-winning Sri Lankan playwright Ruwanthi de Chikera.

Feb. 10-13, the 17th Gawad CCP Para sa Alternatibong Pelikula at Video screens 150 entries at the CCP Dream Theater, with awarding rites on Feb. 13.

Feb. 17, the first International Rondalla Festival will be launched, with 200 rondalla musicians from different countries featured in a series of concerts, most of them in the Bicol region.

Feb. 19, "Asya 2004 sa CCP" will be launched with an open-air performance of drum bands. "Asya 2004" is the CCP's yearlong thematic focus, and aims to promote appreciation for and understanding of the different cultures of Asia.

NOW SHOWING EXCLUSIVELY AT

ArtFilm
GREENBELT 1

CALENDAR GIRLS

SOME LADIES WILL DO ANYTHING FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Inspired by a true story, Calendar Girls sees a group of Yorkshire matrons posing naked for a calendar to raise money for a medical-research charity after the husband of one of the women is diagnosed with leukemia. This calendar in fact became a worldwide sensation, out-selling even those of Britney Spears and Cindy Crawford.

"Calendar Girls is the Full Monty - female style!"
— Clay Smith, ACCESS HOLLYWOOD

"The most heartwarming film of the year"
— Paul Clinton, CNN

MTRCB Rating: Parental Guidance 13

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Album of jingles breaks record

THE ALBUM compilation of toothpaste jingles has broken pop barriers, becoming a certified platinum record.

SHOW TIME

"Break Barriers" by Close-up and BMG, has captured the hearts and minds of the romantic Pinoy.

New renditions of classic Close-up favorites like "Just a Smile Away" (by Luke Mijares), "I Wanna Get Close" (by Kyla), "Closer You and I" (by Anna Fegi) and "Closer to You" (by Radha) make the CD a collector's item.

The new hit by Paolo Santos, "Close," opens the track list.

Close-up themes have kept love aflame. Experience love the Close-up way in "Lovapalooza" on Feb. 13 at the Bay Walk on-

Roxas Boulevard. Lovapalooza features Free Style

Jay-R, Amee, Sarah Geronimo, Kundirana, Paolo Santos,

Malik, Silk Band, Manila Philharmonic Orchestra, Wency Comejo, Noel Cabangon, Cookie Chua, U-turn Trio, Hour Glass Trio, Ateneo Dance Club, NBK DJs, and Manoblet Dario with Fritz Barth.

Even more exciting than the show is the Kiss for the Record, an attempt to break the longest kiss recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Log on to www.closeupplan-et.com for details and for pre-registration.

Or wait for the Close-up registration booth in selected schools and malls.

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MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1 STUCK ON YOU
11:30, 2:15, 5:00, 7:45, 10:30
PG-13

2 THE LAST SAMURAI
12:20, 3:35, 6:50, 10:15
PG-13

3 BROTHER BEAR
11:45, 1:45, 3:45
5:45, 7:45, 9:45
GP

4 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
11:45, 2:15, 4:45
7:15, 10:00
PG-13

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GP

2 THE LAST SAMURAI
12:00, 3:20, 6:30, 9:50
P13

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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

KILL BILL R18
12:00, 2:20, 4:50, 7:20, 9:50

BROTHER BEAR GP
11:40, 1:40, 3:40, 5:40, 7:40, 9:40

STUCK ON YOU PG13
12:15, 2:45, 5:15, 7:45, 10:20

LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING PG13
1:00, 4:35, 8:10

A TALE OF TWO SISTERS PG13
12:00, 2:10, 4:20, 6:40, 9:00

LAST SAMURAI PG13
12:50, 4:00, 7:05, 10:10

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BEST ORIGINAL SCORE - HOWARD SHORE

BEST ORIGINAL SONG - "INTO THE WEST" PERFORMED BY ANNE LENNOX

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BEST PICTURE

BEST DIRECTOR - PETER JACKSON

WINNER BEST PICTURE

WINNER BEST DIRECTOR PETER JACKSON

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NOMINEE - OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE BY A CAST

Directors Guild of America
NOMINEE - BEST DIRECTOR - PETER JACKSON

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—Mark Katers, LOS ANGELES TIMES

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

THE RETURN OF THE KING

ALL DIGITAL SOUND

AYALA CINEMAS

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G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 THE LAST SAMURAI	1 BROTHER BEAR	1 ISRAELI FILM FESTIVAL	1 STUCK ON YOU	1 THE LAST SAMURAI
2 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS	2 THE LORD OF THE RINGS 3	2 CALENDAR GIRLS	2 THE LAST SAMURAI	2 BROTHER BEAR
3 DIABLO	3 SEABISCUIT	3 REPETORY'S FAME	3 SEABISCUIT	3 STUCK ON YOU
4 STUCK ON YOU	4 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS	4 KILL BILL	4 BROTHER BEAR	4 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
	5 THE LORD OF THE RINGS 3		5 THE LORD OF THE RINGS 3	5 THE LORD OF THE RINGS 3

For screening times, call 729-7777. Movies are subject to change without prior notice. Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 and send to 2333. Or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

MMTA

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MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

EMAIL: mmta@asia.com

FESTIVAL CINEMA

(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 STUCK ON YOU

2 A TALE OF TWO SISTER

3 LAST SAMURAI

4 LAST SAMURAI

5 STUCK ON YOU

6 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

7 BROTHER BEAR

8 DIABLO

9 KILL BILL

10 BROTHER BEAR

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City (Manila) tel 734.8588 RESERVE

1 STUCK ON YOU

2 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

3 TWIN EFFECTS

4 DIABLO

5 STUCK ON YOU

6 BROTHER BEAR

7 LAST SAMURAI

8 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

9 MAPUSOK

Gotesco Cinema

Gotesco Grand Central (Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1 PURI

2 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

3 TWIN EFFECTS

4 DIABLO

5 STUCK ON YOU

6 BROTHER BEAR

7 LAST SAMURAI

8 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

9 MAPUSOK

Gotesco Cinema

Gotesco Commonweath tel 951.0083 RESERVE

1 STUCK ON YOU

2 BROTHER BEAR

3 LAST SAMURAI

4 THE GATHERING

EASTWOOD CINEMAS

(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72

1 STUCK ON YOU

2 LAST SAMURAI

3 BROTHER BEAR

4 A TALE OF TWO SISTER

MASAGANA CINEMA

(Pasay) tel 833.3290 833.3274

1 PURI

2 BROTHER BEAR

3 LAST SAMURAI

DILLON CINEMA

(Manila) tel 734.7724

1 INTERNET QUEEN

2 INTERNET QUEEN

UNIVERSAL CINEMA

(Manila) tel 733.2470 RESERVE

1 STUCK ON YOU

2 BROTHER BEAR

3 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

4 MAPUSOK

5 LAST SAMURAI

DILLON CINEMA

(Manila) tel 734.7724

1 INTERNET QUEEN

2 INTERNET QUEEN

st r mall MOVIES

(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986

1 BROTHER BEAR

2 STUCK ON YOU

3 DIABLO

4 LAST SAMURAI

5 PURI

METROPOLIS CINEMA

(Alabang) tel 850.4285

1 PURI

2 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

3 LAST SAMURAI

4 DIABLO

5 STUCK ON YOU

6 BROTHER BEAR

7 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

8 BRIDAL SHOWER

PREMIERE CINEMA

(Makati City) tel 892.2503

1 PURI

2 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

3 LAST SAMURAI

4 DIABLO

5 STUCK ON YOU

6 BROTHER BEAR

7 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

8 BRIDAL SHOWER

CENTRE PLAZA CINEMA

(Balanga, Batangas) tel (047) 237.7007

1 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

2 HOME COMING

SUNSHINE CINEMA

(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376

1 KING RAT

2 WILD BUTTERFLY

JADE CINEMA

(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 LAST SAMURAI

2 BROTHER BEAR

3 KILL BILL

4 LOST ISLAND

CINE NEPO CINEMA

(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1 LAST SAMURAI

2 BROTHER BEAR

3 KILL BILL

4 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

CINE NEPO CINEMA

(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1 THE GRUDGE

2 LOST ISLAND

3 BUFFALO SOLDIER

4 DOBLE SEDUCTION

FESTIVAL CINEMA

Level 4

Festival Supermall

Filinvest - Alabang

Tel. 85035-71 to 72

Schedule subject to change without prior notice

MONA LISA SMILE

OPENS ON FEB. 4

Aranea Center

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
Ali 2	DIABLO
Ali 3	THE LAST SAMURAI
Ali 4	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
Ali 5	KILL BILL
Ali 6	STUCK ON YOU
Ali 7	BROTHER BEAR

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FEB 13	OGIE & REGINE CONCERT
FEB 14	JOHN FORD COLEY CONCERT
FEB 15	OGIE & REGINE CONCERT
FEB 16	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
FEB 18	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
FEB 22	PBA FIESTA CUP OPENING

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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
CORONET	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	BAKAT / DOUBLE SEDUCTION
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	SEX SCANDAL
B	LORD OF THE RINGS
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KILL BILL
CINEMA-2	PURI
CINEMA-3	MALIKMATA
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LAST SAMURAI
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CAPTAIN BARRELL
CINEMA-6	MALIKMATA
CINEMA-7	MEMENTO MORI
CINEMA-8	TWINS EFFECT
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LAST SAMURAI
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	BROTHER BEAR
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STUCK ON YOU
CINEMA-12	LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
CINEMA-14	A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
CINEMA-15	DIABLO

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NECINEMATIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PINAS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
CINEMA-1	KILL BILL
CINEMA-2	BANGKOK HAUNTED
CINEMA-4	CABIN FEVER

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

ENTERTAINMENT

Starstruck success

By Blaise C. Gacoscas, Contributor
Photos by Harvey Tapan

AFTER ABS-CBN digs a gold mine in the phenomenal Taiwanese boyband F4, now it's GMA-7's turn to be smiling all the way to the bank. The network has created its own F4 in the four "Starstruck" survivors—Mark Herras, 17, Rainier Castillo, 18, Yasmien Kurdy, 15, and Jennylyn Mercado, 16.

Jimmy Duavit, GMA Network's executive vice president and chief operating officer, couldn't believe the tremendous audience response to the group.

"The optimism was there," said Duavit, "but we didn't expect the group to be a huge success. Honestly, we never imagined the audience would receive the group as warmly as they did."

Last Sunday, thousands of shrieking teenage fans jammed the Araneta Coliseum to witness the announcement of the two "ultimate" "Starstruck" survivors. Patterned after "American Idol," "Starstruck" is the first reality-based star search in the country. It had about 1,000 applicants from all over the Philippines, which was trimmed down to 30, then to 14, then to four, and finally, to two.

Uncontrollable fans

The TV audience participated in the voting process through text messages and e-mail. Hosted by Dingdong Dantes and Nancy Castiglione, the show ran from Monday to Friday, from Oct. 27 last year to Feb. 1, 2004.

Outside the coliseum, controlling the shrieking fans from getting inside the venue was a nightmare for the 30 Araneta security guards and 20 GMA guards. A fire truck was at the red gate to help control the crowd if it became unruly.

According to one Araneta guard on duty, fans started to sleep by one of the gates as early as 2 a.m. Sunday. ("Starstruck, The Final Judgment" started at 7:52 p.m. in Araneta and was aired on delayed telecast at 9:30 p.m. the same day on Channel 7.)

Battle for ratings

At the battle for ratings, "Starstruck" was in a close fight with ABS-CBN's "It Might Be You." But every Friday, during which a contestant was eliminated, the show's ratings zoomed higher than the Bea Alonzo-John Lloyd Cruz show, said Peachy Guiogio, GMA-7's program publicity head.

"STARSTRUCK" winners: Mark Herras and Jennylyn Mercado



JAYA

Last Friday, "Starstruck" delivered a 37-percent rating, while "It Might Be You" got 32 percent. Its final episode last Sunday peaked to 42 percent against the 11-percent rating of Channel 2's "24, Season 2."

"Starstruck" finalists helped boost the ratings of other GMA shows. In the AGB Philippines' overnight ratings, "Jessica Soho Reports" got 13 percent last Jan. 28 against eight percent of Channel 2's "Special Assignment." GMA-7's "K! The One Million Videoke Challenge" scored 31 percent last Jan. 25 against 25 percent of Channel 2's "Wansapanataym."

Competition shelved

According to a GMA source, ABS-CBN actually had to show called "Star Circle Quest," a talent search with the same format as "Starstruck." But the station decided to shelve the show after "Starstruck" gained momentum.

Deo Endrinal, ABS-CBN's vice president for talk, variety and reality TV, confirms this.

"As a strategy, you, of course, don't want to go head on (with competition). So, it was like get the whole pie rather than just a slice of it," he says.

The other reason why ABS-CBN postponed the airing of "Star Circle Quest" was because "we want to revise a little the mechanics of the search, like what percentage (should be given) to popularity vis-à-vis professional judging," according to Endrinal.

"You have to maintain a certain balance between the meter of mass popularity via texting and the professional meter, which (is de-

termined by) the experts."

Endrinal added that talent searches were nothing new to ABS-CBN whose Talent Center has been conducting searches for the network in the past 10 years. The center has discovered talents like Piolo Pascual, Diether Ocampo, Patrick Garcia, Kristine Hermosa, and the late Rico Yan.

"This is the first time we're doing it on TV," said Endrinal of "Star Quest."

About "Starstruck's" success, Endrinal said it was expected.

Not cheap

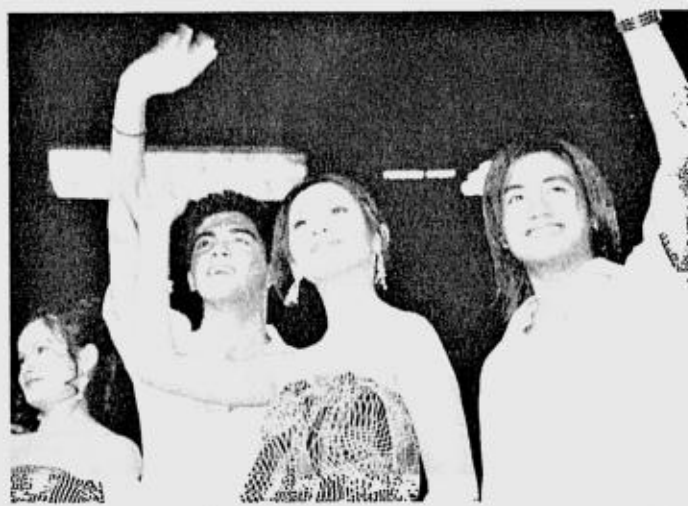
Although GMA-7's investment on "Starstruck" quickly paid off, the show's production budget wasn't cheap.

"We trained them (contestants)," said Guiogio, referring to money that had been spent in giving the contestants' singing, dancing, acting workshops, including major makeovers. Add to these the show's numerous out-of-town locations and provincial tours of the four finalists to promote the show's last episode.

But Duavit refused to reveal how much his network spent to mount the show.

"It's lower than the benchmark budget for

STARSTRUCK/A21



JENNYLYN rules (center) with Mark (left) as Rainier keeps his killer smile.



REGINE Velasquez

Some stars take the road less traveled

LAST year, Salma Hayek surprised everyone by turning serious and getting Julie Taymor to direct her in "Frida." This year, it's Neve Campbell's turn to reveal her artistic and committed side: She's convinced the legendary Robert Altman to direct "Company," a movie in which she conceptualized, and in which she is starring in and producing.

Campbell, who added to her popularity by starring in the hit movie, "Scream, 3," is going on a completely different cinematic trip in "Company." The film is about the Joffrey Ballet and its dancers, and you can't get less commercial than that!

But Campbell feels the movie needs to be made, so she's moved heaven and earth—and Robert Altman—to make it happen. Would that other stars would also use their clout to get similarly small but worthy films produced—even if they have to do the producing themselves!

John Woo is another film person

who's gotten an epiphany to make more substantial movies. After coming with visually dynamic action-thrillers, Woo now wants to use his cinematic expertise to make Asian culture clearer and more appealing to Caucasians.

For his part, Ray Romano, the star of the hit sitcom, "Everybody Loves Raymond," is using his popularity to teach children to love the world of wonder and imagination that reading can open up to them. Like Julie Andrews and Madonna before him, Romano has turned to writing stories for children.

His first book, "Raymie, Dickie and the Bean: Why I Love and Hate My Brothers," is expected to click with today's kids, because it is realistic in its depiction of sibling relationships.

To make the book even more textured and realistic, Romano co-wrote it with his own two brothers, Richard, a cop, and Robert, a teacher.

Finally, Geena Davis is coming up with a different kind of production, and

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre



it's the most unique of all: At age 47, she's preparing to deliver twins in a few months' time.

Davis is aware of the risks involved, but she's taking good care of herself and is in great health, so she's confident that her latest "double-feature" production will be a (pro)creative success!

Feedback

FROM PHILIP R. Lustre: "I'm a psychology graduate and want to react to the Jan. 10 episode of the TV program, 'Victim': Is terrorizing people and making them nervous, uneasy and embarrassed, the show's primary purpose? Is this their idea of a joke? What they did to those

poor kids wasn't funny.

"Practical jokes should be played only on adults, since they have already established control over their psyche. To play cruel jokes on those helpless children is very irresponsible. Children have delicate and vulnerable psyches that are still developing. Exposing them to scary and traumatic situations, either real or simulated, will have a lasting effect on their personalities.

"Those kids on the show are in their formative years, when they develop self-confidence or an inferiority complex. Exposing them to traumatic situations could have irreversible consequences. Telling a kid that the situation was just a practical joke won't eradicate the damage done."

IVP-Philippines annual meeting

IVP-PHILIPPINES will hold its fourth annual meeting at the CCP at 8:30 a.m. on Feb. 21. The organization is made up of US International Visitor Program alumni

from the Philippines, with Aniceto M. Sobrepeña as chair.

The theme of the fourth reunion is Responsible Citizenship and a Unified Nation Through Volunteerism. Call Mr. Evangelista at (02) 840-2536.

National Arts Month events

THE CCP has lined up exciting events for February, in celebration of National Arts Month:

Feb. 6, the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra pays tribute to Filipino composers in "Viva Filipina." Compositions featured are Peña's "Symphonic Variations," Buenaventura's "Symphony No. 4," Abelardo's "Piano Concerto" and Romero's "Philippine Portraits."

Feb. 6-8, Ballet Philippines' "Flip" showcases cutting-edge works by upcoming choreographers.

Ongoing until Feb. 8 is Tanghalang Pilipino's production of "Sa Pagitan ng Piping Sandali" (Middle of Silence) by

SOME/A22

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Reel- and real-life couples in Cinema Paraiso

REMEMBER the time when your heart fluttered after witnessing Carmen Rosal and Rogelio de la Rosa pledge their undying love for each other? Or when Nida Blanca and Nestor de Villa dancing cheek-to-cheek enthralled you? Do you recall watching Guy (Nora Aunor) and Pip (Tirso Cruz III) cuddling a doll called Maria Leonora Teresa? (I remember that doll was in our house for my mom's safekeeping at the height of the Guy and Pip love team days! Ma. Leonora Teresa even had her own fans' club!)

You can relive all these moments in Cinema Paraiso's "Mga Kwento Ng Pag-ibig—A Celebration of Love Themes and Love Teams in Philippine Cinema," at the NCCA Building, 633 General Luna St., Intramuros, Manila, starting Feb. 4. It is a banner project of the Committee on Cinema of the Na-

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal



tional Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), in cooperation with Asian Eye Productions for the National Arts Month Sining Pinoy 2004.

The event includes a festival of classic films and a forum and an audio-visual exhibit, all of which pay tribute to the most unforgettable love teams of Philippine Cinema.

In spite of their great on-screen chemistry, movie love teams left their romance on screen. The legendary screen coupling of Carmen Rosales and Rogelio de la Rosa was all for

show. The couple was rumored to be constantly feuding off-screen.

For some movie love teams, the romance led to the altar, fulfilling their fans' fantasy.

Cinema Paraiso kicks off with three films in which three real-life couples romance on screen.

On Feb. 4, FPJ Productions' "Perlas Ng Silangan," a color epic set in the South during the Spanish occupation, will feature the screen romance of real life husband and wife Fernando Poe Jr. and Susan Roces. This is one of their most memorable movies, made in 1969, the year the two got married on Christmas day.

The screen partnership of the late Pancho Magalona and Tita Duran dominated the movies in the late '40s up to the '50s. In 1953, the couple made the movie "Sa Isang Sulayap Mo,"

REEL A22

May blue
tamper
proof seal
ang
tunay



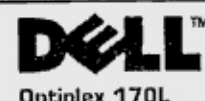
TUESDAY,
FEBRUARY 3, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER



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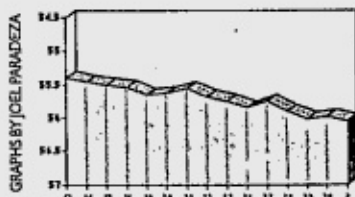
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 2, 2004

₱ 105.62 = \$ 1

As of 5 p.m., Feb. 02, 2004

GOLD: \$400.80-401.30

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 30, 2004



By Clarissa S. Batino

THE GOVERNMENT'S short-term borrowing cost went up by as much as 21.5 basis points in yesterday's auction of treasury bills as banks sought a higher return on their funds due to increasing political risks.

The Bureau of Treasury yesterday said it would only tolerate a mild increase in the rates to let some steam off an apprehensive market but unreasonable bids in the coming weeks would be rejected, National Treasurer Sergio Edeza said yesterday.

"The market's apprehension is causing disruption so such may trigger an uptick in the rates from time to time. Hopefully, our decision to accept higher rates today had tempered the market and that rates would stabilize in the coming weeks," he added.

Yields went up even as the peso slid past the 56-to-1 mark yesterday. The local currency closed at 56.045 to \$1 from 55.98 last Friday.

The benchmark 91-day treasury bill rate went up by 5.6 basis points to 6.216 percent, the 182-

day yield rose by 21.5 basis points to 7.546 percent and the 364-day rate increased by 20.4 basis points to 8.384 percent.

Only the 91-day treasuries were well received as bids reached P6 billion, allowing the government to raise P3 billion.

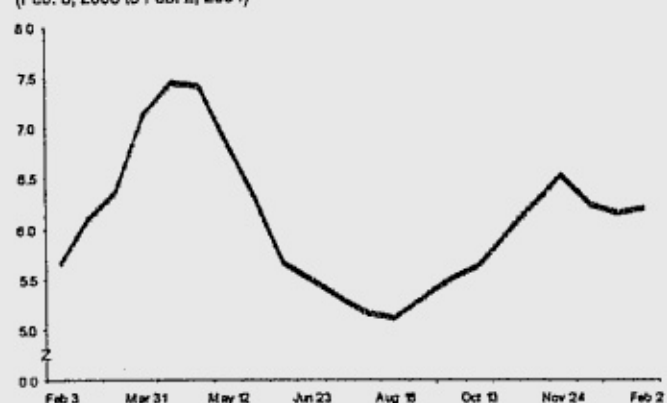
Reduced appetite for the six-month and one-year debt paper prompted the government to accept bids worth only P3.36 billion and P3.275 billion against the auction size of P3.5 billion and P4.5 billion.

"The market is nervous with all these political news. But we have to let the rates go up mildly to ease some of the pressure. Otherwise, we would just be facing a difficult battle with the market," Edeza said.

The problem, according to the treasurer, was that with the political uncertainties, the market was becoming

91-DAY TREASURY BILL RATES

(Feb. 3, 2003 to Feb. 2, 2004)



ing more reluctant to bid on longer-dated paper at a time when the government shifted its borrowing strategy to longer term treasuries.

"The market is reluctant to bet on the long term so it is demanding a higher return," he said.

"But if we shift to short-term, we risk pushing up the entire yield curve. We have less flexibility in adjusting our domestic borrowings because of the huge budget deficit we have to finance this

year. The only option is to shift some of the borrowing requirement to foreign and that is a policy issue that we have yet to decide on," the treasurer added.

Traders said that the market was also worried over the higher inflation rate forecast of the central bank. Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura said Friday that the BSP was expecting inflation in January to range between 3.2 and 3.6 percent.

US woos local firms to vie for Iraqi projects

By Michelle V. Remo

WITH preparations underway for the rebuilding of Iraq, the US government has called on Filipino companies to vie for billions of dollars worth of business opportunities in the war-torn area.

Being an "ally" in the US government's fight against terrorism, the Philippines is privileged to be given primary US contracts for Iraq's reconstruction. The US government has estimated that the total amount of contracts will reach \$118.4 billion.

"Iraq is not a poor country because it has a lot of resources--not only oil but also a highly motivated workforce. We are encouraging the private sector from the Philippines to go to Iraq and to do business (there)," said William Lash of the US Department of Commerce.

Lash, US assistant secretary of commerce for market access and compliance, is in the country to encourage more Filipino firms to invest in Iraq and Filipino skilled laborers to work there.

Lash said other countries such

as Poland, the Czech Republic and Turkey were already aggressively vying for business opportunities in Iraq.

He downplayed perceived security risks in Iraq, which are seen to discourage the entry of businesses there. "A lot of companies still go to Iraq despite the perceived threats because of emerging markets," said Lash, adding that security risks were not only a concern for Iraq but for places elsewhere.

He cited multinational companies Pepsi Cola and Mitsubishi,

which are set to put up facilities in Iraq.

Sosteres Campillo Jr., an official from the Philippines' presidential task force on Iraq's reconstruction, said two big Filipino construction companies were already positioning themselves to be awarded the US contracts. He said one of these was Engineering Equipment Inc. (EEI).

Philippine Ambassador to Iraq Jose Ibañez said the Philippines could be one of the major suppliers of steel, wires, cables, and

US WOOS/BA

February 2, 2004	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.801667468	1.000000	55.964000
Japan	Yen	0.007585	0.009462	0.529500
United Kingdom	Pound	1.462963	1.824900	102.128700
Hongkong	Dollar	0.103085	0.128588	7.196300
Switzerland	Franc	0.637509	0.795229	44.504200
Canada	Dollar	0.60558	0.755401	42.275300
Singapore	Dollar	0.473379	0.590493	33.046400
Australia	Dollar	0.61126	0.762486	42.671800
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.126495	2.652590	148.449500
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.213778	0.266667	14.923800
Brunei	Dollar	0.471986	0.588755	32.949100
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.020435	0.025491	1.426600
UAE	Dirham	0.218265	0.272264	15.237000
Euro	Euro	1	1.247400	69.809500
Argentina	Peso	0.273607	0.341297	19.100300
Brazil	REAL	0.274544	0.342466	19.165800
Denmark	Kroner	0.13422	0.167426	9.368900
India	Rupee	0.017709	0.022090	1.236200
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.210993	0.263193	14.729300
Mexico	New Peso	0.07249	0.090424	5.060500
New Zealand	Dollar	0.537455	0.670421	37.519400
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014064	0.017544	0.981800
South Africa	Rand	0.113852	0.142019	7.948000
Korea	Won	0.000684	0.000853	0.047700
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024067	0.030021	1.680100

INTEREST RATES

February 02, 2004-MART1	2 Years	9.4339	9.325
Rates	3 Years	10.3133	10.2117
Benchmark	4 Years	10.7133	10.64
Interest	5 Years	10.08	10.9883
Rates	7 Years	11.4	11.3267
1 Month	10 Years	11.6464	11.6417
3 Months	20 Years	11.9911	11.9833
6 Months	25 Years	12.3107	12.3
1 Year			

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

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DBP opens P1.7-B credit facility for NFA, millers

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE DEVELOPMENT Bank of the Philippines has opened a P1.7-billion credit facility for the modernization of state-owned National Food Authority (NFA) and the rice milling industry.

"This is the first time in NFA's 32-year history that it will modernize and upgrade its post-harvest facilities," Yap told the INQUIRER in an interview.

Yap noted that this improvement would lower the country's post-harvest losses which now averaged at 300,000 metric tons yearly. The high level of post-harvest production losses is one of the

factors that result in the shortfall in rice supply, which was estimated at 800,000 to 900,000 metric tons per year.

He said this modernization program could help minimize the country's rice importation, which cost some P2 billion to P3 billion.

The NFA and the DBP have already signed the memorandum of agreement that will be presented to President Macapagal-Arroyo this week at the Rice Summit to be held at the Philippine International Convention Center.

Part of the DBP facility is a P100-million loan that could be availed of by rice millers.

In a separate interview, Philip-

pine Confederation of Rice Millers president Joji Co said the DBP loan would allow them to put up state-of-the-art equipment that could improve the recovery of quality rice grains.

"With the said loan, we can acquire vertical whiteners and pneumatic huskers that could also improve the quality of the palay (unmilled rice) that we will process," Co said.

Aside from increasing milling recovery, he said, the new facility would help prolong the shelf life of the grains.

"We will now be able to get rid of our old machines that consume too much electricity," Co said.



HEROES FOR HEALTH AWARD

Pfizer Inc. president and country manager Rey Gerardo Bacarro (second from left) presents the announcement poster of the Heroes for Health Award to Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit during the launch of the award held at the Department of Health. Looking on are (from left): Pfizer corporate affairs director Karen Villanueva and Health human resource development bureau director Kenneth Ronquillo.

Tan to lease 100-ha property in Clark for aviation facility

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Tycoon Lucio Tan is sealing an agreement for the lease of a 100-hectare property in the southern portion of the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport for development into an operation base for his aviation companies, an official of the Clark International Airport Corp. said.

Adelberto Yap, CIAC president, said Tan, who has major stakes in Philippine Airlines, Lufthansa and MicroAsia, was also keen on buying the Clark-based for Omni Aviation owned by retired PAL pilot Ben Hur Gomez.

Tan's interest in Clark has been increasing in view of the scheduled transfer here of some 1.5 million Ninoy Aquino International Airport passengers starting 2005, Yap said.

This year, three major regional infrastructure projects that will integrate the development of Clark, Subic Bay Freeport Zone in Zambales and the Luisita Industrial Park in Tarlac will be linked to the DMIA. These projects are the North Luzon Expressway expansion, Subic-Clark-Tarlac Toll Road and the Manila-Clark North Rail Transit.

The construction of the toll road and the electric-powered rail starts in March.

The Alinea Marconi System will start the \$11-million radar project for the DMIA on Feb. 7.

"The (Macapagal) administration is moving heaven and earth to make (Clark airport) a significant aviation point in Asia," Yap said during the inauguration of the DMIA's rehabilitated apron and taxiways on Friday.

The use of the DMIA as a cargo handling facility was boosted after President Macapagal-Arroyo approved the government's open-skies policy in December last year.

Yap said the DMIA "is actually the place to be." With its two 3.2-km runways, he said the Clark airport could still be expanded.

Naia's passenger capacity, currently at 8 million, has reached its full level.

Yap said the prospects of DMIA were better now. By 2007, he said courier giant Federal Express would be getting 40 hectares for its Asian operations.

Nippon Cargo and Gulf Air are "interested" in running their cargo businesses from Clark, he said.

Yap said the main ramp of the DMIA could now accommodate at least 10 aircraft at a time after the rehabilitation of the airport's apron and taxiways.

Bienvenido Manga, DMIA general manager, said wide-bodied aircraft like the MD-11, Boeing 727, 747, 757 and 767 that were in the current and projected fleet of the United Parcel Service (UPS), could now use the rehabilitated areas.

Ben Solis, UPS general manager, said the developments being undertaken at the 2,500-hectare airport were "signs of the political will and foresight" of the government.

The UPS, Solis said, was increasing its nightly flights to 24 and its cargo volume from 700 to 1,000 tons. **Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk**

NSC plant rehab starts today

By Michelle V. Remo

THE REHABILITATION of the Iligan-based steel plant of National Steel Corp. is set to formally start today after the winning bidder Global Infrastructure Holdings Ltd. (GIHL) signed last week a memorandum of agreement with the steel company's creditor-banks.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to lead the inaugural ceremony at NSC's Iligan plant, which was shut down in 1999 due to debt problems amounting to about P16 billion.

The reopening of the NSC's steel plant is seen to boost Iligan's economy as well as the country's steel industry. It is also expected to bring back to work about 500 former employees of the steel plant.

Moham Mittal, founding chair of GIHL's holding company Ispat group, said bringing back NSC into operation would significantly boost the country's steel exports and, thus, help the economy grow.

"We are looking at the Chinese market for NSC's steel products," said Mittal.

GIHL said NSC's reopening was expected to contribute about P4 billion to the country's gross domestic product and some P157 million in taxes to the Iligan City government. The company also projected that NSC would contribute some P1 billion in taxes to the national government.

Also, with an annual production capacity of 1.5 million metric tons of steel products, NSC is expected to generate P750 million in revenue per year. The amount is based on the current average steel price of \$500 per ton.

Pramod Mittal, Ispat group chair and son of the elder Mittal, said that winning the right to operate NSC was a fulfillment of one of the company's goals. He said his father has been interested in the Iligan-based steel plant since 1994.

GIHL won the right over NSC's assets after the terms of its offer were approved by the majority of NSC's creditor-banks. Under the MOA between the creditors and GIHL, the Indian investors will pay the former a total of P13.25 billion, P1 billion of the amount will be paid in cash, while the remaining P12.25 billion will be paid in eight years.

GIHL won the right for a 90-day exclusive negotiation with NSC's creditor-banks after its original bid of P11.905 billion bested the P7 billion offered by LNM Holdings Ltd., the only other bidder.

Ispat group, the holding company of GIHL, is engaged not only in the manufacture of iron and steel, but also in mining, power generation, infrastructure, textile production and software development, among other businesses. It also has over 3,000 employees worldwide.

2003 budget deficit at P199.8B

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE MACAPAGAL administration is scheduled to announce today the final budget deficit figure for last year.

National Treasurer Sergio Edeza told reporters yesterday that the 2003 budget gap, based on latest information, was at P199.8 billion, which was below the P202-billion ceiling.

For this year, the government is aiming to keep the gap between revenue and expenditure at P197.8 billion, even after the Development Budget Coordination Committee increased the revenue goal by P3.2 billion to P674.4 billion.

The revenue goal was originally set at P671.2 billion. The government will use the additional revenue to finance expenditure items on top of the P896 billion in spending as proposed to Congress, under this year's General Appropriations Act.

Government sources said the P3.2 billion in additional revenue would be used to settle the government's outstanding account payables.

The additional revenue would come from the adjustments in the goals of the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Treasury. From P105.2 billion, the Bureau of Customs raised its collection target to P110.58 billion while the Bureau

of Treasury committed to deliver P40.73 billion, up from the original target of P30.5 billion.

The additional revenue from these agencies was expected to offset the reduction in the Bureau of Internal Revenue's collection goal to P476.3 billion, from the original target P488.6 billion.

Government officials explained that the inter-agency DBCC had cut the BIR's goal after Congress failed to pass crucial revenue measures, including the indexation of beer and tobacco excise taxes which was supposed to raise for the government about P7 billion in additional collection.

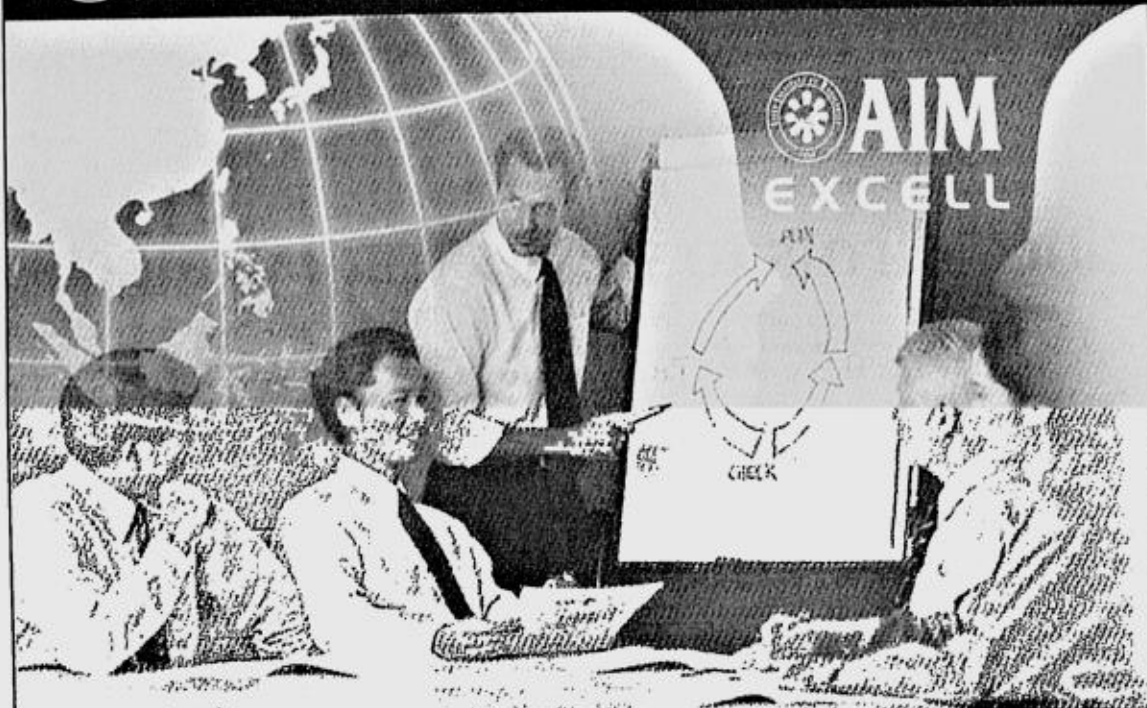
Edeza credited the government's strong revenue performance last year for the lower budget gap.

The BIR said collections in 2003 reached P425.3 billion, higher by about P1.3 billion than its goal of P424.27 billion. In December, the internal revenue agency collected P36.7 billion or P2.2 billion more than the target of P34.5 billion for the month.

The Bureau of Customs collected P106.056 billion in taxes and tariffs in 2003, surpassing the P100.056-billion goal by 6 percent and the year-ago level by P9.8 billion or 10.2 percent.



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Arbitration court dismisses SGS case vs RP

By Clarissa S. Batino
and Philip G. Tubeza

THE COUNTRY scored an initial victory against a Switzerland-based customs consultancy firm that had asked the Philippine government to pay \$165 million for services rendered.

The World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (Icsid), an arbitration tribunal based in Washington D.C., threw out on Thursday the case filed by Societe Generale de Surveillance S.A. (SGS) against the Philippine government for lack of jurisdiction.

Also, the arbitration body ordered SGS to bring its case before a Philippine court.

"The tribunal stayed and, in effect, dismissed as outside its jurisdiction contract claims amounting to \$165 million filed by SGS against the Republic of the Philippines. The republic, apart from dis-

puting as exorbitant the amount of the claim, sought the dismissal of the case in view of the clear contract provision stipulating the jurisdiction of Philippine courts in any dispute between the two parties," said Justice Undersecretary Manuel A. J. Teehankee.

The Swiss pre-shipment imports inspector sued the Philippines on April 2002 after it failed to settle P6.05 billion in obligations for services rendered from 1998 to March 2002, when SGS' 12-year contract was terminated.

Congress did not earmark any budget for the payment of the government's obligations with SGS, as some legislators questioned the amount claimed and the charges slapped by SGS on the government.

"We are pleased with the outcome. We will treat SGS fairly and we trust that they will

maintain the same attitude toward us," said Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong.

Finance Assistant Secretary Emmanuel Bonoan said the government was ready to meet SGS in a Philippine court.

Finance officials said the government's contract with SGS recognizes the jurisdiction of a Philippine court to settle the issue.

Before SGS went to court, the Macapagal administration had asked the Swiss firm to allow the government to settle its obligations in installment over several years.

The Swiss firm had billed the Philippine government an equivalent of P6.48 billion (Swiss francs 206,150,238.14 at an exchange rate of a franc to P31.437) for services rendered from Sept. 1998 to March 2000.

After reviewing the billing, a task

force formed to validate the claims of SGS said that the government should pay only P6.05 billion.

The task force had recommended that P117.5 million be deducted from the SGS bill and that another P314 million in charges be reviewed further.

The Swiss inspector, according to the finance department, is willing to forego the P314 million provided that an agreement be forged on the terms of payment for the rest of the obligation.

Senator Robert Barbers said in February 2002 that when the government first reviewed its obligations to the Swiss firm, the debt stood at only

P1.563 billion.

Barbers questioned the in-

crease in the obligation to P6.05 billion.

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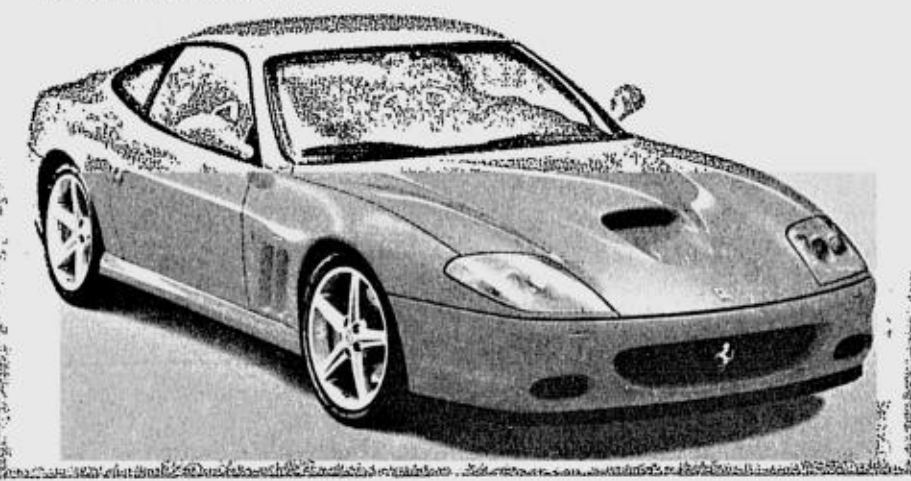
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2nd Direct Build Project "KENSINGTON PLACE" launch

The Much awaited Launching of Kensington Place, a residential condominium in Fort Bonifacio with G&W Architects as the lead proponent in cooperation with Banco De Oro as depository bank was held last Friday, January 23, 2004 at the Fort Bonifacio Place is a unique residential development that employs the Build to own system (BTO) that lets homeowners directly hire the Construction Technical Professionals like Architects, Engineers and Contractors to build their condominium at direct cost realizing savings of up to 40%.

No less than the Chairman of renowned Architectural firm

G&W Architects, Arch. Gilbert Yu and the Senior staff were there to welcome all of the guest. Present in the launching were the Chairman of the Board of Examiners for Architecture - Arch. Eugene Gan, The Chancellor for the United Architect of the Philippines College of Fellows Arch. Ricardo Poblete, and The National President of the UAP himself, Arch. Robert Sac and the Senior Vice President of the Trust Department of Banco De Oro, Mr. Ador Abrogena to grace the occasion. The homeowners of the first Direct Build Project - Penhurst Parkplace were there to give testimony

to the success of the system. The Major and Important players from the Construction Industry were equally in attendance to support the Build to Own Project. TV personality / host Ms. Pia Guanio was at hand to volunteer to represent homeowners in inquiring some of the features and mechanics of Kensington Place.

The guest were able to experience a Virtual 360 degree view of the units through state of the art 3-D computer technology simulating a walkthrough into the condominium units giving a virtual experience of living in Kensington Place.

Kensington Place is a 2 year delivery project that will start construction on June 30, 2004 commencing upon closing of subscrip-

tion of the units but is expected to start sooner like the first BTO project - Penhurst Parkplace which was fully subscribed and started construction in just 3 months. Unlike other projects now in the market that have long delivery periods of 5 to 6 years, The Direct build projects are completed within 2 years allowing homeowners to move in earlier and achieve further cost savings.

A studio unit starts at a remarkably low P 1.35 million, a 2-Bedroom at P 3.06 million and a 3-Bedroom at P 5.11 million. For condominium units in one of the most prime location and with the highest future appreciation value in the Philippines this is truly affordable.

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Ron Nalban

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LAST week, I bumped into my old friend, Dick Villalon, who was junior Philippine golf champion many years ago and who is now a top instructor and consultant. He persuaded me, much against my better judgment, to take up golf again. I have not touched a golf club for about 10 years since a burglar made off with my golf bag. But he was very persistent, so I agreed to go to the driving range last Saturday.

We got a bucket of balls and he checked my stance, swing and grip. Then the ball boy put a ball on the tee and I took my first swing. I was imagining that I was walking down the 18th green, 3 shots ahead of Tiger Woods, when suddenly Dick's voice interrupted my reverie. "I think it would be better if you held the other end of the club."

Quickly changing ends, I pretended to have been clowning around. I pulled myself together and took a half-swing. There was solid contact but I did not see the ball fly. Instead, to my horror, the ball lay unconscious. Fortunately, Dick had advised him to wear a crash helmet so he was only stunned. Gaining confidence, I began hitting the ball harder and in different directions. One ball struck a waiter in the lower abdomen, an abdominal shot. He doubled up in agony and shouted something in Tagalog, or it may have been English. I went over to apologize but he remained testy. Feeling that perhaps I had done enough damage for one day, Dick drove me home.

As I got out of the car, my entire body went into spasm, and I found my knees tucked neatly under my armpits and my hands wrapped around my toes. My wife rushed to our neighbor who is a Cairo practor from Egypt. He said, "It will cost a lot to straighten his back. You had better go to the bank and get a back-to-back loan." I had more slipped disks than a D.J. so Dick pulled my feet while my wife pulled my arms. Suddenly, there was a loud crack and my vertebrae snapped back into place. I feel fine except that on Friday, I was 5 ft 8 inches and now I am 6 ft 3 inches.

In Indonesia, the farmers who were forced to destroy all their chickens have been given chicks. I wish somebody would give me one.

GMA and FPJ are unlikely to form a coalition. They are polls apart.

In Germany, a man who pleaded guilty to eating another person was charged with manslaughter. I am sorry. That should have been manslaughter.

Don't forget to see Disney's latest movie

LAST week was quite eventful. On the news that Moody's had downgraded our dollar debt, our sovereign debt and 7 top banks, the Phisix rose 27 points. In my daily newsletter, which is very outspoken, I wrote that this was a crazy response and that if a Martian spaceship had been flying over the Philippine Stock Exchange, they would have reported no sign of intelligent life.

I further predicted that the market would drop 30 points and return to the 1,500 level. Next day, aided by a correction on Wall Street and rumors of a coup, which was blown up out of all proportion by the media, the index fell 35 points. The following day, it fell another 7 points to 1,503 and today, it disintegrated, losing 61 points to 1,447. This is a 50-percent retracement from the high.

I suppose the market was relieved that our bonds had not been downgraded by two notches but the other shoe has still to drop. It is a sad reflection of the Philippine economy. While the rest of Asia is booming and China's GDP growth for 2003 was 9.1 percent, our exports have made no headway and investment has remained weak. Industrial production is falling and inflation is creeping higher.

The peso is the worst performing currency in the galaxy, hitting an all time high of 56.22 before the central bank decided that it had to intervene. The peso recovered to 55.98 that day but the amount of dollars transacted was an exceptional \$202 million. At that rate, our reserves will rapidly be depleted.

The Senate has not yet passed last year's budget and the Supreme Court has destroyed all hope of reviving the mining industry. We used to be a sizeable producer of gold, silver and copper, and when I came here in 1980, mining shares were the blue chips, and gold touched \$800 an ounce. When the gold price sagged to \$260, the mines shut down as they became unprofitable but there is still gold waiting to be mined.

An Australian mining company is willing to

invest \$15 million in Philex to resuscitate a mine, which contains a large quantity of gold, now up to \$400 an ounce. But the Supreme Court said that, under the Constitution, foreign companies could only supply technical and financial assistance to Filipino miners. The fault does not lie with the Supreme Court because they are lawyers whose job is to interpret the law. The fault lies with the Congress and the Senate for not passing new laws to encourage investment.

Let foreign companies put up the money and use their technical expertise, and let them have a majority stake (not 100 percent). That would create new jobs and help our balance of payments as gold is sold in dollars. We have the highest unemployment rate in Asia, 16 percent unemployed and 9 percent partially employed. Why don't we help these people and the 40 percent who live below the poverty level?

We appear to have a death wish, a determination to prevent foreign money from coming into the country. Money has been pouring into the other Asian countries on a massive scale as investors' hedged against a further decline in the dollar by investing in the Asia Pacific region. But we do nothing to encourage it.

The degree of risk has fallen from 100 to a very low level and several blue chips are standing at single digits so I have told subscribers to WATCH them and to BUY as soon as the market stabilizes. There are several other stocks at low levels, which also look ripe for recovery. The indicator gave the top for the market one day in advance, and I am now looking for it to give a BUY signal within the next week or so.

One broker in particular caused the sharp sell-off in TEL. Once they stop selling, the stock should recover before the results are announced at the end of February. As they are expected to be much better than anticipated, the company might decide to write off the exchange loss suffered since June 30, 2003. Our research department has advised reducing GLOBE after its disappointing report and I know that they prefer TEL.

Today's crash appears to have no particular cause. Other Asian markets are mixed and the peso continues to recover. I feel that the blame lies squarely on the media who sensationalize coup rumors and a plot to kill FPJ, and this has the effect of destroying investors' confidence. They should check out their facts first, instead of making retractions next day, and exercise greater restraint. mrbearbull@hotmail.com

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 2, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	8,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	17.5	17.5	17.25	17.25	33,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	50.5	50.5	49.5	49.5	1,889,700
China Banking Corp.	67.5	67.5	67.5	67.5	39,800
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	41	41	40	40	28,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.51	0.52	0.5	0.51	1,100,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26.5	27	25.5	26	749,000
Philippine National Bank	24.5	24.5	24	24	68,400
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	300
Union Bank of the Phil.	27.5	27.5	27	27	12,300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	1950	1950	1950	1950	940
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.34	1.32	1.32	650,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1475	1475	1475	1475	520
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	1,600
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.74	0.74	0.72	0.72	1,380,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	925	925	870	880	69,820
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.047	0.048	0.047	0.047	9,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.041	0.041	0.04	0.04	200,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	24,000
Philippine Tel. Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.44	1.46	11,490,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	865	865	815	815	298,520
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	21,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	20	20	19	19.25	212,500
Manila Electric Co. B	34	34	31.5	31.5	1,955,800
Petroneer	3	3	2.7	2.8	5,470,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	120,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Inf'l Container Term'l Sv	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	383,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	40,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	22,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	34,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30	30	30	30	1,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	19.5	19.5	19.25	19.25	83,900
Swift Food Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	50,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	56.5	56	56.5	64,500
San Miguel Corp. B	70.5	71	69	70	698,500
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	450,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6	6	5.5	5.5	9,485,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	48,000
APC Group Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	1,600,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	56,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	100,000
Bancor Holdings Inc.	8.8	9.7	8.8	9.7	4,000
Bancor Holdings Corp.	0.67	0.68	0.64	0.64	2,850,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.18	100,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	1,000,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	1,530,000
Fininvest Dev. Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	246,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	23.5	23.5	22.25	22.25	522,800
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.92	1.92	1.92	1.92	200,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.14	1.16	1.14	1.14	2,440,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	40,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	10,950,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	300,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	100,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	500,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	12.25	12.25	12.25	12.25	41,700
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.2	7.5	7.2	7.5	44,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	1,100,000
Pryce Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	700,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	100,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	280,000
Manila Jockey Club	11	11	11	11	20,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	100,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	24	24	23.5	23.5	138,700
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,800
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,300
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,400
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,500
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6.1	6.1	5.9	6	4,969,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.13	0.13	900,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.22	0.225	1,860,000
Fininvest Land Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.06	1.06	14,020,000
Fin-Estate Land Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	850,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	100,000
Primex Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	50,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	80,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	5.9	6	16,574,000
MINING					
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	1	1	1	1	30,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	760,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	900,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	5,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	26,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.44	0.44	0.44	0.44	3,740,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	15,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	3,000,000
SHARES					
Bank & Fin Svc.	4,080,050				122,908,275.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	143,606,140				548,456,630.00
PRO	39,103,000				143,704,150.00
Mining	36,430,000				2,290,500.00
OIL	18,000,000				54,000.00
GRAND TOTALS	241,219,190				817,413,555.00
AVERAGES					
Bank & Fin Svc.	453.94				DOWN 13.39
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,194.56				DOWN 98.40
PRO	553.40				DOWN 19.39
Mining	1,524.57				DOWN 32.99
OIL	1.30				UNCH 0.00
SME	100.00				UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	822.40				DOWN 15.52
Composite	1,447.05				DOWN 61.25

NO. OF ADVANCES: 8; NO. OF DECLINES: 51; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 26; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 85; NO. OF TRADES: 2,557

DISCLOSURES

MERCEDITA Nollado resigned as director of **Cebu Holdings Inc.** Jaime Ayala was elected to fill up the vacancy.

REX Gabonada resigned as compliance officer for the manuals of corporate governance of **Philweb Corp.** and **ISM Communications Corp.** Sonia Pamatmat replaced him. Roberto Valdes resigned as treasurer, excom secretary and compliance officer under the two companies' anti-money laundering manuals. Sonia Veras replaced him in these capacities. Veras also replaced Valdes and Francis Hernandez as chief finance officer of Philweb and ISM, respectively.

INTERPHIL Laboratories Inc. bought 5,000 of its own shares at P1.90 each.

DAVID TC Ng resigned as director of **Export and Industry Bank.** Edna Reyes was elected to replace him.

BANK of the Philippine Islands clarified that reports claiming Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala will be chair while Aurelio Montinola III will be president of the bank have no basis since no decision on the matter has been made.

VIVANT Corp. will import fuel to supply a retailer to further enhance its income. *Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research*

US woos local firms . . .

From page B1
food products to Iraq. He added that Filipino food exporters could take advantage of the growing demand for "halal" food in Iraq.

Lash said the US government was looking for firms that have a good track record in management and those that can offer competitive price.

Ibazaeta added that Filipinos with labor and managerial skills could play a huge part in the development of Iraq. The Philip-

ines is eyeing to increase the number of Filipino workers in Iraq from the current estimate of 1,000.

Aside from wooing more Filipino companies to vie for Iraq's reconstruction, Lash is also in the country to discuss trade issues with the Philippine government. He is set to meet with Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima to talk about how the United States and the Philippines can improve on their trade relations.

STEADY IN 2003

Meralco systems losses at 10.85%

By Ronnel W. Domingo

DISTRIBUTION giant Manila Electric Co. yesterday said it posted an unchanged systems loss rate of 10.85 percent at end-2003.

Meralco officials explain that there are two kinds of systems losses: technical losses, which are unavoidable, refer to electricity that is dissipated as heat as it passes through transmission and distribution lines; and non-technical losses, which refer to electricity lost to pilferage.

Republic Act 7832 allows private distribution utilities like Meralco to pass on to customers the cost of systems losses up to 9.5 percent. Utilities shoulder systems losses

above the cap.

Meralco did not provide data on how much it would shoulder from the cost of its systems losses for last year.

However, the company said it urgently needed to make additional investments in new sub-transmission and distribution facilities to further reduce systems losses.

Meralco's chief of supply Jobert Almazora said the utility needed to put up more substations to shorten its distribution lines.

"Long distribution lines result in less reliability (of supply) and larger technical losses so we need to continuously invest in new facilities," Almazora said.

Meralco's campaign against pilferage

included the so-called Depressed Area Electrification Project, implemented in the late 1980s, which legalized illegal taps and financed house wiring for beneficiaries.

Meralco first vice president Ricardo Buencamino said the utility was continuously reassessing how it would tackle the matter.

"Instead of just taking a purely technical approach, we also started exploring creative means to find a permanent solution to the problem," Buencamino said.

"Our information campaign stresses that (electricity) pilferage is not only morally wrong, but also that illegal connections put families at risk," the official added.

Appeals court issues TRO on Veco stake sale

By Doris C. Dumlaog

THE COURT of Appeals issued a 60-day tem-

porary restraint order (TRO) on the ruling by the Cebu Regional Trial Court nullifying the acquisition by Vivant Corp. of a 30-percent

stake in Visayan Electric Co.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. said the appellate court's fifth division

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Philippine Daily Inquirer
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I love you very much.

Michael

2 col x 5 cm = P1,000

Mel,

For the woman I love...
all my life...
with all my heart.
I love you more.

Julie Paul

2 col x 3 cm = P500

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PCGG

Presidential Commission on Good Government

INVITATION TO BID

The Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) invites offers to purchase by way of sealed public bidding the following properties:

LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	FLOOR PRICE
BACOLOD CITY Bacolod Reclamation Area, Bacolod City	46,688 square meters, more or less, of residential/commercial land under TCT No. T-219335	P182,083,000.00
PARAÑAQUE CITY Bayview Village, Roxas Boulevard, Bacalaran, Parañaque City	4,038 square meters, more or less, of residential/commercial land	P203,028,500.00
TAGAYTAY CITY J.P. Rizal Avenue cor. Akle Road, Tagaytay City	42,043 square meters, more or less, of residential/commercial land under TCT No. T-43969	P126,125,500.00
BATAAN Bgy. Townsite (Cabcaben), Mariveles, Bataan	Site I – 140,274 square meters, more or less, of agricultural land under TCT Nos. T 81837, T 81838 and T-81839 Site II – 101,861 square meters, more or less, of agricultural land under TCT No. T 81834	P2,104,185.00 P1,629,514.00
NAGA CITY Bgy. Mabolo, Naga City	5,952 square meters, more or less, of residential / commercial land, under TCT No. 13275	P11,902,000.00
ILIGAN CITY Bgy. Palao, Iligan City	6,000 square meters, more or less, of residential/commercial land under TCT No. 21216, including building, broadcasting equipment and furniture and office equipment	P16,194,500.00
LEGAZPI CITY Bgy. Bitano, Legazpi City	Site I 3,327 square meters, more or less, of residential / commercial land under TCT No. 22921 Site II – 1,834 square meters, more or less, of residential/commercial land under TCT No. 22921	P29,103,250.00 P5,043,000.00

Pre-bidding conference will be held on February 20, 2004 at 3:00 p.m. at the PCGG Conference Room, Ground Floor, IRC Building, #82 EDSA, Mandaluyong City. Sealed bids will be accepted, opened and tabulated in the presence of the bidders on March 2, 2004 at 3:00 p.m. at the above-mentioned address.

Complete description/specifications of the properties including bidding guidelines, bid forms, instructions to bidders and information memorandum are available for a non-refundable fee of ONE THOUSAND PESOS (P1,000.00) at the Asset Management Department, c/o Ms. Alma M. Provide, 3rd Floor, IRC Building, #82 EDSA, Mandaluyong City from February 2 to February 17, 2004 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The sale of the properties shall be in CASH, on "AS IS, WHERE IS" basis.

The PCGG reserves the right to reject any and all bids, or any part thereof, waive any formality or requirements contained therein and accept the offer it considers as the most advantageous to the Government.

PCGG BIDDING COMMITTEE

(PDI-Feb. 1 & 2, 2004)

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Housing Authority invites contractors who have completed similar projects costing at least 50% of the proposed contracts and accepted with PCAB to bid for the contracts listed below.

Contract Package/Location	Approved Budget	Funds Source	PCAB License	Work Description
Calatman Resettlement Project, Brgy. Galulan, Calatman, Northern Samar	P5.48M	Local Housing Fund	Cat B & MA for roads	Road works, drainage, water system

- A. Eligibility forms may be obtained upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P200.00 at the NHA-BAC Secretariat Office, 2nd Floor, NHA Main Building, Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City upon submission of a letter of intent not later than January 17, 2004. The BAC Secretariat may be contacted at Tel. Nos. 929-8016 and 929-4561/65 local 262.
- B. The schedules of the eligibility screening and bidding activities are as follows:
Issuance of Eligibility Forms: February 3-17, 2004
Deadline of submission of Eligibility Forms: February 19, 2004 10:00 a.m. at the Office of the BAC Chairperson
Issuance of Bid Documents: February 20-27, 2004
Pre-Bid Conference: February 23, 2004 10:00 a.m.
Dropping of Bids/Opening of Bids: March 16, 2004 not later than 10:00 a.m.
- C. Bid documents shall be issued to eligible bidders only upon payment of non-refundable fee of P2,500.00.
- D. Bid security/deposits shall be in the form of cash, manager's or cashier's check only.
- E. The provisions of the IRR of RA 9184 shall govern all particulars relative to registration, eligibility screening, bidding, evaluation of bids, post-qualification and award of contract.
- F. NHA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive formality any minor defect thereon, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Government.

(Sgd.) JOSEPH PETER S. SISON
Assistant General Manager
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Feb. 3 & 10, 2004)



HCMi AND AUTOMALL PHILIPPINES INK MOA ON CAR EXCHANGE

Honda Cars Makati, Inc. (HCMi) formally sealed an agreement with Automall Philippines (CPM) for a car exchange program during the HCMi Auto Xchange Plus contract signing held on January 16, 2004 at Honda Cars Makati. Present in the contract signing are (in photo, L-R): Roberto F. De Ocampo, Philand Group of Companies chairman of the board; Carlito B. Castrillo, Philand Group of Companies president and CEO; Rufino Luis T. Manotok, Honda Cars Makati, Inc. chairman & president; Ramon M. Zialcita, general manager, HCMi; and Danilo D. Pedro, assistant vice-president for Service and Parts Departments, Honda Cars Philippines, Inc. For more details of the said program, interested parties may call the HCMi Sales Departments at the following contact numbers: 852-6750 to 51 (Honda Cars Makati); 636-7989 or 636-8196 (Honda Cars Pasig); 807-0303 or 809-5055 (Honda Cars Alabang); and 718-2037 or 718-0626 to 27 (Honda Cars Shaw). Interested customers may also inquire through Honda TXT: (0917) 817-0707 for Globe users (0920) 917-0707 for Smart/Talk N' Text users; and HCMi website (www.hondamakati.com.ph).

Republic of the Philippines Province of Cebu Bids and Awards Committee Cebu Capitol, Cebu City

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

The Provincial Government of Cebu through the BIDS and AWARDS COMMITTEE (BAC) invites qualified Contractors with "AAA" License and registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) as Large "B" for Roads, to apply for eligibility and to submit sealed bids for Road Improvement Projects (Asphalting) - Phase II, Package I of the Province of Cebu, charged against the General Fund in the amount of P30,269,001.72 under PR # 04-395 dated 01-29-04 and ALOBS # 100-04-01 dated 01-29-04 and, charged against Continuing Appropriation for 20% Development Fund in the amount of P26,039,306.23 under PR # 04-395 dated 01-29-04 and ALOBS # 100-04-01 dated 01-19-04 with a total Approved Budget for the Contract of P56,308,307.95.

Fund Source	Road Sections	Length (Km)
General Fund	Sibonga Port Road, Sibonga	0.300
	Kawayan - Mantalongon Road, Dalagueta	2.000
	Boljoan - San Antonio Road, Boljoan	4.535
	Malabuyoc - Sorogon Road, Malabuyoc	3.000
	Pob. Alegria - Lepanto Alcoy Road	3.000
	Dapdap - Bangkasan Road, San Remigio	2.000
	Sogod Pansoy Road, Sogod	1.888
	Sub-total	16.723
20% Development Fund	Balirong - Alapco Road, Naga	2.488
	Vito - Candulawan Road, Minglanilla	3.007
	Can-asuhan (Bridge Approach), Carcar	0.500
	Banigan - Manay-as Road, Badjan	1.233
	Balao - Doldol Road, Bani	2.000
	Lakdon - Cambuhawe Road, Balamban	0.726
	Poblacion Tabogon Ilihan, Tabogon	4.645
	Sub-total	14.599
	Total Length	31.322

Interested parties are requested to submit a Letter of Intent and updated documents to the Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), through the BAC Secretariat prior to the issuance of the Plans and Bid Documents.

Major Items of Work Involved

Item 310 - Bit. Concrete Surface Coarse (Hot Laid, 50 mm thk)

Minimum Equipment Requirements:

Equipment Type	Quantity	Owned
Asphalt Batching Plant, (Cap. 80 Tons/Hr.)	1 Unit	Owned
Asphalt Distributor (Truck Mounted)	2 Units	Owned
Asphalt Paver	2 Units	Owned
Hydraulic Excavator	2 Units	Leased
Motor Grader	2 Units	Owned
Tandem Road Roller (10 Tons)	2 Units	Owned
Vibratory Compactor (15 Tons)	2 Units	Owned
Pneumatic Road Roller (12 Tons)	2 Units	Owned
Water Truck (Cap. 6,000 gals.)	2 Units	Owned
Dump Trucks, (10 T - 20 T)	10 Units	Owned
Payloader, 2.5 cu.m.	4 Units	Owned

Schedule for the Procurement Activities:

Dates	Time	Place
Submission of Letter of Intent & Issuance of Eligibility Forms	Feb. 9-9, 2004 8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Deadline for submission of Eligibility Documents	Feb. 13, 2004 8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Issuance of Notice to Eligible Bidders	Feb. 20, 2004 8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Issuance of Plans and Bid documents	Feb. 23, 2004 8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Pre-bidding Conference	Feb. 25, 2004 10:00 A.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Public Bidding	March 11, 2004 10:00 A.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat

Only Bids within the Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid will be accepted.

Plans and Bid Documents can be obtained from the BAC Secretariat, PGSO, DEP-ED Bldg., Cebu Capitol, Cebu City upon payment of non-refundable amount of P6,000.00.

All particulars relative to the eligible process, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

The Bids and Awards Committee of the Province of Cebu reserves the right to reject any or all bids to waive any defects or formality therein and to accept bids considered complying and most advantageous to the Government.

For more information please contact the BAC Secretariat at Tel. No. 253-9614 / 253-3981. This requirement is also posted at the PGSO Bulletin Board, DEP-ED Bldg., Capitol, Cebu City.

(Sgd.) EDUARDO T. HABIN
Chairman

(PDI - February 3 & 9, 2004)



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION and COMMUNICATIONS



METRO RAIL TRANSIT CORPORATION



GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

(Reinsurance for MRTC's Industrial All Risks Policy)

The GSIS-MRTC-DOTC Joint Bidding Committee (JBC) thru its Eligibility & Evaluation Group (EEG) is inviting qualified local and foreign reinsurance companies/brokers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the renewal of reinsurance for the Metro Rail Transit Corporation's Industrial All Risks Policy, with an indicative budget of US\$6.5 Million all inclusive, for the period 4:00PM of February 28, 2004 to 4:00PM of February 28, 2005.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Issuance of Eligibility & Bidding Documents	February 2, 2004-February 16, 2004 9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M. JBC Secretariat 5th Fl., GSIS H.Q. OSVP-GIG, Roxas Blvd., Manila
Pre-Bid Conference	February 9, 2004 9:00 A.M., 7th Floor Room A, GSIS Bldg. Roxas Blvd., Manila
Submission & Opening of Eligibility & Bid Envelopes	February 17, 2004 2:00 P.M. Office of the Chairman Room A, 7th Floor GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Manila

For applicant-foreign reinsurers and applicant-brokers with foreign lead reinsurers, the foreign reinsurer must have a credit rating of at least "AA-" from a reputable rating agency as of September 2003 or the latest available rating, and certify that it will provide a lead line of at least 20% of the reinsured risk. Domestic and Foreign lead reinsurers must have a net worth of at least Php2.0 Billion as of December 31, 2003.

Eligibility and Bid documents shall be issued to applicants upon filing a Letter of Intent to Apply and payment of a non-refundable fee of US\$1,000.00 to the Government Service Insurance System.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Screening, Pre-Bid Conference, Evaluation of Bid, Sufficiency of Bid Security, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provision of existing laws, rules and regulations.

The JBC and EEG reserve the right to reject any and all bids or Letters of Intent, waive any defect therein and accept the offer which they deem responsive and most advantageous to the government.

Eduardo T. Habin
Acting Senior Vice-President
General Insurance Group
GSIS

(PDI - Jan 27 & 28 and Feb. 3 & 4, 2004)

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OBITUARIES

The Davao Medical School Foundation (DMSF) Community

- The Board of Trustees
- Faculty, Staff and Students
- Relatives, and Friends

condoles with
and joins the bereaved family of



RAYMOND D. LEGAL, PhD.

(August 27, 1948 – January 30, 2004)

Executive Vice-President of DMSF

in praying for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Davao Medical School Foundation,
Circumferential Road, Bajada, Davao City.

Interment will be on February 4, 2004, 2:00 p.m.
at Davao Memorial Park.

JOSE AGAS ZABANAL, SR.

of Agutaya, Palawan
and Novaliches, Quezon City

Peacefully joined his Creator
on January 26, 2004 at the age of 84.

His bereaved wife Soledad; children Josefina, Estrellita, Evelyn and Ruben, Eduardo and Leorose, Marilyn and Romeo, Josel and Marichu, Jesus, Giovanni and Rosario, Jose Jr. and Pilar; grandchildren Bernadett, Genevieve, Thomas, Gabriel, Shalimar, Noel, Moses, Angelica, Dawn, Marijo, Verdadel, Filipina, Joel, Lianna, Regina, Gillian, Lorelei, Vacil and Eduardo Jr.; relatives and friends mourn his passing away and request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the St. Peter Memorial Chapels, 296 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Thursday, February 5, 2004 at the Holy Cross Memorial Park, Novaliches, Quezon City, after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at the St. Peter Memorial Chapels.

It would please Jose if in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Jose Agas Zabanal Foundation Scholarship Fund, at 9 Mayflower Street, Del-Nacia Ville No. 3, Talipapa, Novaliches, Quezon City.

GEORGE O. CHUA

Peacefully joined the Lord
on January 31, 2004
at the age of 86.

His remains lie in state at
Chapel 2, La Funeraria Paz,
Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on
February 4, 2004, 9:00 a.m. at
Manila Memorial Park, Sucat,
Parañaque City.

**ALBERTO CORTEZ
MONTELLANO, SR., M.D.**

Peacefully joined our Creator on January 30, 2004
at the age of 93.

His remains lie in state at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Dr. A. Santos Avenue, Sucat, Parañaque City.

Mass will be offered on February 4, 2004, 1:30 PM at the chapel.

Interment will be on February 4, 2004, 3:00 PM at the Loyola Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque.

For further details please contact Albert (0917-3476476 or Aissa (0919-2241585).

**"...absent with the body
to be present with the Lord."**

2 Corinthians 5:8

Juanita Ilano Javier

went home to her Creator on January 30, 2004.

She lived a joyful and peaceful life in Banalo, Bacoor, Cavite together with her husband Bayani, children Jimmy & Vivian, Freddie & Haydee, Ronnie & Bing; grandchildren Booy, Pee-Anne, Bo-Peep (†), Aaron, Budit, Kay-Anne, Jonjon, Kariz, Ronjie, Shell and Mookie.

Her remains will be transferred to Bacoor Unida Church on Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. Interment at Bacoor Memorial Garden after the 2:00 p.m. Memorial Service at Bacoor Unida Church.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
Psalm 23:6

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*"Eternal life will swallow up that
which can die. God made us for
this very reason and He has given
us the Spirit as a guarantee
that we will live again."*

2 Cor. 5:4-5

When life reaches its sunset,
it doesn't mean the end of a journey;
it marks a new beginning of eternal
peace. Rise up and take God's hand.
Gone but not forgotten, deep in
our hearts, we carry our loved-ones'
memories to a special tomorrow
when we will be united again... one
at heart and one in heaven.
Our loving sympathies.

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ANNE NARVAEZ ABUNDO

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on January 28, 2004 and is reunited
with her late mother Aurora.

Her father Benjamin; and brother Lito; and sisters Marie and Joanne request for your prayers. A Mass for the eternal repose of her soul is set at 9:30 a.m. on February 4, 2004 at Lourdes Church.

Interment to follow at North Cemetery.

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OF THE PHILIPPINES

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- Shape and organize your speech or presentation to persuade listeners and get the response and results you want
- Conquer fear and negative stress
- Make your performance skills, your sense of humor and your own personality work for you
- Give impromptu and prepared speeches before the class and receive personalized feedback

What You Will Cover

- Evaluating your pluses and minuses as a speaker
- Making an impromptu or introductory talk
- Making a public speech or company presentation that keeps your audience hanging on every word
- Answering questions from an audience
- Giving a credible speech—even when you're caught unprepared
- Delivering the complete presentation
- Using your words and your body to persuade the audience
- Speaking on special occasions—presenting and receiving an award graciously

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For further information, please call Jasmin Runes at telephone numbers 8451324 or 7596680 or e-mail at jrunes@ecccp.com

The UP annual fair 2004

AS with its culture of excellence in service and national awareness, the University Student Council of UP Diliman would be providing the students with a venue to come together in an event that celebrates national pride, school spirit, and local talents. The UP Fair will be held at the UP Diliman Sunken Garden on the 9th to the 14th of February, 2004. This year's theme, Un-fair! will showcase a different kind of fair as the title literally states. In a deeper sense, the theme not merely describes the existing status of a society in irony whose power resides in the hands of a few, but it also epitomizes the higher call to share our views and to create one voice. And with such an objective, it also reminds students that there are a lot of things outside books that could develop the person into actualization. Indeed, as has always been the stand of UP, learning is not limited to the university's classrooms.

The annual UP fair is a jam packed, six-day series of concerts, shows, booths, bazaars, and a lot of other gimmicks sponsored by the different UP fraternities, sororities, and organizations, catering to a wide variety of students and community leaders in and outside the university. The Fair captures the spirit and culture of the university that is known not only for its significant history, but also for its free and dynamic character.

For inquiries, please call (02) 9205301 local 6643 or visit the USC Office at Room 206, Vinzons' Hall, UP Diliman, Quezon City.

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF LA UNION
City of San Fernando

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATOR INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY PREQUALIFICATION & TO BID

The Provincial Government of La Union, through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), San Fernando City, La Union, invites suppliers, manufacturers and/or distributors classified accordingly and registered with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) or SEC, to apply for pre-qualification and if qualified to bid for:

QUANTITY	UNIT	DESCRIPTION	ABC
2,850	cu.m.	Aggregate Base Course	P 513,000.00
2,270.10	cu.m.	Class "A" Concrete Mix	5,902,260.00
710	pcs.	16 mm dia x 6 m Deformed Bars	188,150.00
88	pcs.	10 mm dia x 6 m Deformed Bars	9,240.00
3,364	bd.ft	Formworks	107,648.00
117	kgs.	Wires & Nails	4,680.00
12,000	pcs.	Potted Lakatan tissue culture	180,000.00
100,000	pcs.	Lakatan tissue culture	
		cultured banana plantlets	650,000.00
18,000	pcs.	Cardaba banana plantlets	117,000.00
106,000	pcs.	2x2x6 black gusseted	
		002 plastic bags	53,000.00

Issuance of Bid Documents	February 13, 2004
Pre-Bid Conference	February 16, 2004, 2:00 p.m. Diego Silang Hall
Deadline of Submission of Eligibility Requirements	March 04, 2004, 9:00 a.m. Diego Silang Hall
Opening of Bids	March 04, 2004, 9:00 a.m. Diego Silang Hall

All particulars relative to bonds, pre-bid conference, evaluation of bids, post-qualifications, and award of contract shall be governed by the provisions of R.A. 9184 and its implementing rules and regulations, as amended and other applicable rules and regulations.

The Provincial Government of La Union reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect contained therein, and to award the suppliers, manufacturers and/or distributors whose proposal as evaluated by the Provincial BAC of La Union the most advantageous to the Government.

(Sgd.) GEOFFREY S. TILAN, Ed. D
Provincial Administrator
BAC, Chairman

(PDI - February 3 & 10, 2004)

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Manila Memorial Park, Sucat,
Parañaque City.

**ALBERTO CORTEZ
MONTELLANO, SR., M.D.**

Peacefully joined his Creator on January 30, 2004
at the age of 93.

His remains lie in state at the Holy Trinity
Memorial Chapels, Dr. A. Santos Avenue, Sucat,
Parañaque City.

Mass will be offered on February 4, 2004, 1:30
PM at the chapel.

Interment will be on February 4, 2004, 3:00 PM
at the Loyola Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque.

For further details please contact Albert
(0917-3476476 or Alisa (0919-2241585).

Juanita Ilano Javier

went home to her Creator on January 30, 2004.

She lived a joyful and peaceful life in Banalo, Bacoor, Cavite together with her husband Bayani, children Jimmy & Vivian, Freddie & Haydee, Ronnie & Bing; grandchildren Booy, Pee-Anne, Bo-Peep (+), Aaron, Budit, Kay-Anne, Jonjon, Kariz, Ronjie, Shell and Mookie.

Her remains will be transferred to Bacoor Unida Church on Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. Interment at Bacoor Memorial Garden after the 2:00 p.m. Memorial Service at Bacoor Unida Church.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
Psalm 23:6

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"Eternal life will swallow up that
which can die. God made us for
this very reason and He has given
us the Spirit as a guarantee
that we will live again."
2 Cor. 5:4-5

When life reaches its sunset,
it doesn't mean the end of a journey;
it marks a new beginning of eternal
peace. Rise up and take God's hand.
Gone but not forgotten, deep in
our hearts, we carry our loved ones'
memories to a special tomorrow
when we will be united again... one
at heart and one in heaven.
Our loving sympathies.

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"...absent with the body
to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

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- 2 Any identification document (I.D.)

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ANNE NARVAEZ ABUNDO

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on January 28, 2004 and is reunited
with her late mother Aurora.

Her father Benjamin; and brother Lito; and sisters Marie and Joanne request for your prayers. A Mass for the eternal repose of her soul is set at 9:30 a.m. on February 4, 2004 at Lourdes Church.

Interment to follow at North Cemetery.

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OF THE PHILIPPINES

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- Speak and think with greater clarity and purpose, stressing key ideas
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- Shape and organize your speech or presentation to persuade listeners and get the response and results you want
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- Make your performance skills, your sense of humor and your own personality work for you
- Give impromptu and prepared speeches before the class and receive personalized feedback

What You Will Cover

- Evaluating your pluses and minuses as a speaker
- Making an impromptu or introductory talk
- Making a public speech or company presentation that keeps your audience hanging on every word
- Answering questions from an audience
- Giving a credible speech—even when you're caught unprepared
- Delivering the complete presentation
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- Speaking on special occasions—presenting and receiving an award graciously

Plus!

A videotape of your presentations with feedback from your course leader to evaluate in private

For further information, please call Jaemin Runes at telephone numbers 8451324 or 7596680 or e-mail at jrunez@eccp.com

The UP annual fair 2004

AS with its culture of excellence in service and national awareness, the University Student Council of UP Diliman would be providing the students with a venue to come together in an event that celebrates national pride, school spirit, and local talents. The UP Fair will be held at the UP Diliman Sunken Garden on the 9th to the 14th of February, 2004. This year's theme, Un-fair! will showcase a different kind of fair as the title literally states. In a deeper sense, the theme not merely describes the existing status of a society in irony whose power resides in the hands of a few, but it also epitomizes the higher call to share our views and to create one voice. And with such an objective, it also reminds students that there are a lot of things outside books that could develop the person into actualization. Indeed, as has always been the stand of UP, learning is not limited to the university's classrooms.

The annual UP fair is a jam packed, six-day series of concerts, shows, booths, bazaars, and a lot of other gimmicks sponsored by the different UP fraternities, sororities, and organizations, catering to a wide variety of students and community leaders in and outside the university. The Fair captures the spirit and culture of the university that is known not only for its significant history, but also for its free and dynamic character.

For inquiries, please call (02) 9205301 local 6643 or visit the USC Office at Room 206, Vinzons' Hall, UP Diliman, Quezon City.

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF LA UNION
City of San Fernando

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATOR INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY PREQUALIFICATION & TO BID

The Provincial Government of La Union, through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), San Fernando City, La Union, invites suppliers, manufacturers and/or distributors classified accordingly and registered with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) or SEC, to apply for pre-qualification and if qualified to bid for:

QUANTITY	UNIT	DESCRIPTION	ABC
2,850	cu.m.	Aggregate Base Course	P 513,000.00
2,270.10	cu.m.	Class "A" Concrete Mix	5,902,260.00
710	pcs.	16 mm dia x 6 m Deformed Bars	188,150.00
88	pcs.	10 mm dia x 6 m Deformed Bars	9,240.00
3,364	bd.ft	Formworks	107,648.00
117	kgs.	Wires & Nails	4,680.00
12,000	pcs.	Potted Lakatan tissue culture	180,000.00
100,000	pcs.	Lakatan tissue	
		cultured banana plantlets	650,000.00
18,000	pcs.	Cardaba banana plantlets	117,000.00
106,000	pcs.	2x2x6 black gusseted	
		002 plastic bags	53,000.00

Issuance of Bid Documents	February 13, 2004
Pre-Bid Conference	February 16, 2004, 2:00 p.m. Diego Silang Hall
Deadline of Submission of Eligibility Requirements	March 04, 2004, 9:00 a.m. Diego Silang Hall
Opening of Bids	March 04, 2004, 9:00 a.m. Diego Silang Hall

All particulars relative to bonds, pre-bid conference, evaluation of bids, post-qualifications, and award of contract shall be governed by the provisions of R.A. 9184 and its implementing rules and regulations, as amended and other applicable rules and regulations.

The Provincial Government of La Union reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect contained therein, and to award the suppliers, manufacturers and/or distributors whose proposal as evaluated by the Provincial BAC of La Union the most advantageous to the Government.

(Sgd.) GEOFFREY S. TILAN, Ed. D
Provincial Administrator
BAC, Chairman

(PDI - February 3 & 10, 2004)

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REAL ESTATE

Price of owning condos competing with rental rates

By Tessa R. Salazar

A FEW years ago, owning a home near the office in the metropolis was as unimaginable as winning the lotto jackpot.

So, you bow to the pressures of your landlord's rental terms of P10,000 and above for years on end. After so many years of backbreaking work, you find yourself making your landlord rich, but you're still a homeless yuppie. Soon you would only just be a "homeless urban professional," since you would be too old to qualify as a "young" urban professional.

Affordable high-rise projects

But recent trends are showing that developers are now shifting their focus on affordable high-rise projects. Not yet quite affordable for some as there are still "balloon" (lump) payments to consider once or twice a year, but the terms, nevertheless, have become more affordable for more "senior" yuppies. Look around and you may see 22-square-meter (or larger) studio-type condo units in different parts of Makati, Manila and Ortigas areas temptingly becoming within reach price-wise.

Active developers giving life to this trend have been Megaworld and, lately, Ayala Land. Upscale developers such as Century Properties with its partners are now building the likes of Bel-Air Soho, units of which

now only fetch as low as P1.8 million, or a monthly rate of P8,000—almost the same as your apartment's monthly rent.

More studios, 1 BR

Colliers International Philippines takes note of this trend recently, saying that to make condominiums more affordable, developers introduced more studios and compact one-bedroom units in their mix.

Colliers International Philippines associate director for research and consultancy Richard Raymundo explains that this way, the total contract price could be controlled. He says, for example, that if a developer would like to sell a residential unit at P75,000 per square meter; a 30-sq-m studio would cost P2,250,000.

A 300-sq-m three-bedroom unit, for instance, would cost P22.5 million at the same per-sq-m rate.

"Even if you introduce a good payment term for the 3-BR, the monthly amortization would still be too high. But at the end of the day, the developer still achieves the P75,000 per square meter (rate)," Raymundo explains.

Affordability concerns have led to the emergence of the mid-income high-rise segment, he added.

Broad segment

The mid-income segment, however, is very broad. It also takes various forms—from condominiums to single-detached homes and townhouses. Gen-

erally, the price range is from P500,000 to P5,000,000, he says.

The trend of the affordable high rise started after the Asian crisis in 1997, reminisces Raymundo. Developers had to maintain a certain per-square-meter price but had to address affordability concerns. Thus, they built the affordable high-rise.

Meanwhile, Colliers also notes that the market seems saturated with mid-income high-rise projects, yet the take up remains encouraging. (Take up means the sales per month of a project.)

When Megaworld started these projects in 1998 or 1999, it was reporting more sales because of less competition. Colliers observes that more players are entering this segment, including Ayala Land and Filinvest Land.

Another trend noted was that the luxury 3-BR rents have declined by nearly 45 percent from its peak down to P80,000/unit/month. The drop in prices started in 1997 after the financial crisis. Luxury 3-BR units are usually located on Ayala Avenue and in Fort Bonifacio and Rockwell.

Colliers also notes that land values had fallen by 60 percent from its peak now down to an average P171,250/sq m in the Makati CBD and P77,500/sq m in Ortigas.

Raymundo explains that while there haven't been much transactions in the market, it was inevitable for the prices to have dropped at these levels.

He recalls that the drop was due to the weakness after the 1997 Asian crisis. Basically, when rents and prices started to



fall, land values could not be sustained at their peak price levels.

"If you were a developer, you would not buy land at the same level as it was in 1997, as it will be impossible to make an acceptable profit margin. To keep a decent profit, the land values must also go down."

Retail sector

Meanwhile, retail consumption is being increasingly financed through debt. (Retail consumption refers to goods and services purchased in malls and other retail shops.)

Says Raymundo: "Our suspicion is that people are now starting to buy more with credit cards. This is why BSP (Central Bank) is starting to implement more guidelines for the reporting of credit card loans."

Another trend that has been observed is

that developers are now into niche or theme-retailing to differentiate their projects. The best examples would be the retail formats in Eastwood and also the new Greenbelt.

Office sector

Rents have fallen by 50 percent since 1997. These are rents in the Makati CBD and Ortigas in general.

Colliers also expects that the rents for the office sector would start to firm up toward the end of 2004.

"The underlying reason is the absence of new supply. In fact, no new building will be completed in the Makati CBD for the next three years. As the current vacant space is absorbed, landlords can increase their asking rents due to the tightening supply," Raymundo predicts.

Asia's largest trade fair opens March 16

By Charles E. Buban

HUNDREDS of building and construction exhibitors from different countries will gather at the World Trade Center in Pasay City next month to participate in the World Building and Construction Exposition (Worldbex) 2004.

Scheduled on March 16-20, the trade exhibit will stage world-class building materials, home improvement fixtures, business equipment and construction needs at drop down prices.

"Worldbex 2004, now on its ninth year, still remains Asia's ultimate construction exposition," according to Joseph Ang, founding chair of Worldbex Services International, the event organizer.

Booths

Over 500 booths were set up last year and attracted a record high of more than 40,000 trade professionals, contractors, manufacturers, distributors, exporters, importers, dealers, construction consultants and end-users

from over 20 countries.

Countries which joined last year's expo include Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

"With a bigger exhibition space of 8,000 square meters, we are confident that this year's event will be even better than last year in terms of number of participating international and local exhibitors and business to be generated," said Ang.

Cientele

The five-day expo will not only attract big businesses in the field of building and construction, but also small clients who simply want to improve their homes and their businesses.

"This event ensures that even small clients, like homeowners, couples, small businessmen and housewives find what they need," explained Ang.

Products to be showcased include those for interior design and renovation, building materials, home improvement fixtures, business

equipment, construction needs, real estate and housing services, mechanical and electrical engineering systems, security and fire equipment, information technology and telecommunications at drop down prices.

"Here they can find home fixtures like doors and windows, bathroom furnishings such as tiles and even the smallest items like towel holders, soap dispensers and shower heads," revealed Ang.

Partnerships

Ang is confident that new business partnerships will be forged and old ones renewed during the Worldbex 2004.

"Worldbex 2004 is the perfect venue to open major gateways of opportunities in the building and construction industry in the country," he said.

He also added that Worldbex is still accepting exhibitors and may call 531-6374 and 531-6350 or e-mail info@worldbex.com. Other information can be availed at www.worldbex.com.



NEARING COMPLETION

With only interior and exterior painting and plastering works remaining, construction of the six-cluster UN Gardens residential development of housing developer Empire East Properties Inc. is now 90 percent complete. Punchlisting is ongoing for Cluster 6, which will be ready for turnover to individual unit owners this month.

My Dollar Store now in Edsa Central

IN THEIR TRIPS to the US and Canada, sisters Nanette Ting-Ongarranceja and Ortrud Ting would patronize the ubiquitous dollar stores where everything sells for a dollar or less. The Ting ladies, along with another sibling, liked the idea of one-price shopping (described in the US as "the hottest concept in retailing") and decided to bring My Dollar Store to the Philippines, right at the heart of value shopping—the Edsa Central, Greenfield district in Mandaluyong.

While the store name implies selling goods at the price of a dollar, the idea, really, is to have a single price scheme for all merchandise so the Philippine outlet sells items for P99 or less. Pinoy shoppers are acquainted with the P99 store concept but Nanette and Ortrud observed that existing local stores focus mainly on apparel and accessories. The two young owners say that their store offers a more complete shopping experience because it has an amazingly diverse array of merchandise: perfumes, cosmetics, auto products, hardware items, toys, food, home decor, school supplies, baby garments, cookware, laundry stuff, party favors, personal care products and stationery items. Patrons of My Dollar Store in the States are pleasantly surprised to find their favorite dollar store in the value shopping mall at the corner of Edsa and Shaw.

"Some items are not available elsewhere in the country so clients are happy to know that they can now get their favorite products here in Edsa Central," says Nanette.

These days, even shopping has become somewhat stressful for consumers because of unsystematic store layout, incomplete merchandise and exorbitant prices. But My Dollar Store is organized, well-stocked, innovative and "friendly": here, you can have a quick yet relaxed shopping, or you can take your time reviewing the novel items without having to check and recheck the price tag.

Bundle proposition

"Some items go for P99 but smaller items are packaged together and then sold for P99," Nanette explains. "We have bundled items in different categories so you could buy, say, 4 chocolate bars for P99." But the shopper is not limited by the "bundle proposition." You can mix and match two different products that sum up to P99 (for example, a food item and a toy) or you have the option to buy only one from a bundle of two so that your purchase

amounts to one-half of P99. Ortrud adds, "The concept of the store is value shopping, so we really try our best to make the pricing comparative or even less than the market." Since the outlet's opening in mid-December, the siblings are glad to report that sales have been good.

Franchise store

My Dollar Store notes in its website how both the Wall Street Journal and USA Today have reported that "Dollar Stores are one of the fastest growing new business opportunities today." According to Nanette and Ortrud, Dollarstore Corp., the store's parent company, is the only company of its kind that grants licensing opportunities to countries outside North America. The branch in Edsa Central is the first and only store in Asia so the Philippine team enjoys a master franchise status in the region. Besides the Philippines, My Dollar Store operates in countries like Aruba, India, Nicaragua, Mexico and El Salvador.

Running a franchise store that is continents away from the parent company is not an easy task but the ladies are up to the challenge and excited about what lies ahead: "This is a franchise business so we're doing everything we can to smoothen the operations and then we're

going to have it franchised out eventually. There are certainly challenges to overcome but we get a lot of support from our mother company," shares Ortrud—from a state-of-the-art computer system that handles inventory to merchandising techniques. "My Dollar Store" in Edsa Central is the siblings' second business venture, the first being a lingerie boutique.

Value-for-money shopping

My Dollar Store's concept of convenient and value-for-money shopping is in line with Edsa Central's commitment to make the mall more accessible in terms of value and location to thousands of customers every day.

Greenfield Development Corp., developer of Edsa Central, is sprucing up the area so that the new complex, while retaining its familiar value-shopping image, will now have five main features: the Edsa Central Pavilion which is a three-level shopping, dining and entertainment plaza; the open-air Edsa Central Hub, a public transport terminal with specialty stores, service centers and fast-food outlets; the Edsa Central ValuePlus, a value shopper's haven; the Edsa Central Marketplace, a traditional market at the heart of a commercial and business district that will serve residents of nearby villages and subdivisions; and the Edsa Central Station, a stop-and-shop station for commuters of the MRT.

"Being a shopper myself, I like Edsa Central because it has a good location. The look is very unique, especially the al fresco dining area that looks very modern like the ones abroad. It's spacious, fully air-conditioned and has a good mix of shops and restaurants," tells Ortrud. Nanette is a content Edsa Central tenant because "they're very easy to talk to. And the mall is new so the air-conditioning is efficient! The mall administrators also make sure that our concerns are addressed immediately, even on weekends."

So if you're a mom picking up your boys at the nearby school, you can drop by My Dollar Store and buy bubble gum pops, cereals, fabric softener and salad dressing. Older folks can come and buy beautiful vases and photo frames while their grandkids ogle at playsets and party favors. Or if you're a husband who has to make amends to the missus due to frequent overtime work, you can get her a nice perfume for P99 (and reward yourself with that handsome hardware tool for a hard day's work) before taking the ride home.



VALUE-FOR-MONEY shopping at My Dollar Store



CONSTRUCTION ON SCHEDULE

Now 12 percent complete is The Grand Eastwood Palazzo, a 38-story neoclassical residential project of property giant Megaworld Corp. at Eastwood City. Excavation and foundation works have been completed while concreting works are ongoing at basement 1. The project is expected for completion by the fourth quarter of 2007.

Crown Asia, Camella Homes shift to CPAC Monier roofing

CAMELLA Homes and Crown Asia, two of the country's biggest mass housing developers, are now exclusively using CPAC Monier concrete roof tiles in all their ongoing projects nationwide, another testament to the reliability and cost effectiveness of concrete roof tiles over other traditional roofing materials.

The strategic shift of Camella Homes and Crown Asia to CPAC Monier roof tiles would further strengthen CPAC Monier's leadership in the roof tile industry where it has more than 55 percent market share.

Memo of agreement

A memorandum of agreement was recently signed by officials of CPAC Monier Philippines Inc. and Camella Homes and Crown Asia held at the Palms Country Club in Alabang, Muntinlupa City. The MOA calls for CMPI to provide all the roofing system requirements of the two developers, including installation.

Among the current projects of Crown Asia that are using CPAC

Monier concrete roof tiles are Maia Alta, Trails, Groves, Savannah, Plantacion Soleriga, La Buena Vida and Azienda Milan, Azienda Firenze, Azienda Venezia, Citta Italia, Springfield and Sienna Ville.

Camella Homes, meanwhile, uses CPAC Monier roofing for its Tierra Nevada and Tierra Grande projects.

CMPI's world-class manufacturing plant in Sto. Tomas, Batangas, is capable of producing up to two million concrete roof tiles monthly.

Support

CMPI is backed by two world leaders in the roofing industry—the Lafarge Group of France and the Siam Cement Group of Thailand. State-of-the-art technology provided by Lafarge enables CMPI to produce the high-quality roof tiles under the CPAC Monier brand.

Aside from residential projects, CPAC Monier concrete roof tiles are also favored by designers and developers for commercial, industrial and institutional structures. The products are available through an extensive network of dealers nationwide.

The many faces of value

By Alexis A. Acacio, Ph.D.

WE hear of value all the time. Marketing slogans tell us of value for money. Commodities are labeled as the best value and in a similar way, real estate is commonly marketed and sold as a valuable investment.

BUILDING DREAMS

A couple was looking at a property priced at P6 million. Since most banks give a loan to value ratio of 70 percent, they made a down payment of P1.8 million (a 30 percent equity on the purchase) expecting to borrow P4.2 million (70 percent loan to value ratio).

When the loan approval came, the bank told the couple that they could only borrow P3.5 million and not P4.2 million as he expected. They became furious because according to their combined income and credit rating, they can borrow as much as P4.2 million easily. Upon discussing the matter, they were told that the bank "valued" the property at P5.0 million and not at P6.0 million which was the price of the property.

Valuation principles

A fair valuation of a property is usually guided by the following valuation principles:

- **Highest and Best Use**—The property is at its highest and best use. If a residential house is located in an area that is highly commercial, then the house structure would not have any value for the best use for the property might be a commercial building.
- **Principle of Substitution**—It states that the maximum value of a property is established by the cost of purchasing an equally desirable substitute property.
- **Future Benefit or Setback**—The value of a property will either increase or decrease in anticipation of some future benefit or setback affecting the property. The construction



Commodities are labeled as the best value and in a similar way, real estate is commonly marketed and sold as a valuable investment

of a road right of way in the future will increase the value of adjacent pieces of properties. A garbage dump that is constructed beside a property will decrease its value.

- **Increasing and Decreasing Returns**—Improving a property will increase its value but will reach a point wherein any additional improvement would no longer contribute to value addition. Installing very expensive fixtures and tiles in your house may not increase its loanable amount.

- **Principle of Conformity**—The maximum value of a property is realized if the property conforms to the existing standards of the neighborhood. A manufacturing plant inside a residential subdivision is an example of a nonconforming property.

- **Supply and Demand**—If the demand for a property is greater than its availability, its price will tend to increase. If there is an oversupply of housing units in an area, prices will tend to go down.

- **Change**—The physical and economic

conditions concerning property constantly change with time.

The many faces of value

We are often confused when looking at the value of the property. We buy a P6-million property and the bank just assesses its value to be P5 million. We have to understand that the valuation of the property comes from two different points of view—the buyer's point of view and the lender's point of view. The different values include:

- **Market Value**—It is the highest price that a property will bring in the open market. It assumes that both the buyers and the sellers are not in any undue pressure. Both buyers and sellers are also expected to be knowledgeable about the property.

- **Appraised Value**—It is the valuation of the lender on the property. Appraisers follow a set of rules and guidelines in order to come up with a fair appraisal of the property. If lenders or bankers are appraising the property, they follow their own rules regarding appraisal. Sad to say, many lenders assume that the borrower will default. This means that they will make sure that should there be a default, they will still make money out of the transaction. In simple terms, a property with a market value of P6.0 million will only be valued at about P5.0 million by a lender to be on the conservative side. Lenders would want to have a cushion in their exposure. Note that the appraised value is not the amount that you can borrow—it is:

- **Loan Value**—This is the amount that you can actually borrow from the lender. Lenders usually give a loan to value ratio of 0.70—which means that the borrower can loan up to 70 percent of the appraised value of the property. So in our example, the P6.0-million property was appraised by the lender to be only about P5.0 million and can only borrow about P3.5 million (70 percent of P5.0 million).

Final Note. Some pieces of property have the same market value and appraised value based on a lender's point of view but it is also common that they can be different. A borrower may want to have a very high appraisal whereas a lender, cautious about the financing market, will tend to be conservative by appraising

World-class business park to rise in Clark

A WORLD-CLASS 10-hectare business park with an initial investment of \$1 million will be, established inside Clark Special Economic Zone by an American firm, Berthaphil Inc., said Emmanuel Y. Angeles, president of Clark Development Corp.

According to Angeles, Berthaphil will construct high-rise and standard factory/warehouse buildings to be used as an IT center and business arcade similar to the Rockwell Center in Makati City.

He signed a contract with Berthaphil president and general manager Elizabeth M. Castro for the establishment of the business park which will also serve as warehouse and trading distribution hub and a center for light manufacturing and other mixed used business and commercial activities.

More investments

Angeles said that despite the separation of the operations of the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport from CDC, it has attracted more investments inside Clark Ecozone as the total number of investments soared to 371 the current business update as of Oct. 30 last year.

For 2003 alone, Angeles said CDC was able to sign 116 investment projects, which include new projects, renewal of lease agreements and expansion programs.

Preferred investment site

Angeles said Clark zone is still one of the most preferred investment sites in the country by foreign and local in-

vestors due to its attractive features and incentives and availability of skilled English speaking workers.

Aside from airport development, Angeles added that tourism-related activities have been given a boost to generate the interest of local and foreign tourists to visit Clark zone which leads to patronizing the products being offered there.

Agreements

A report made during the recent Metro Clark Advisory Council meeting here, CDC marketing department manager Ethel Miranda showed that CDC signed 85 agreements as of Oct. 30, of which 56 are new lease agreements while the rest are either sublease and expansion agreements.

Miranda also reported to Angeles

that new projects in Clark zone have also committed to generate some 2,141 workers within the first year of their operations, increasing this to 3,434 within the next five years.

MCAC, an advisory body comprising the mayors of cities and towns surrounding Clark zone, is chaired and co-chaired by Angeles and Mabalacat Mayor Marino Morales, respectively.

Angeles said these were achieved even if the rest of the world was reeling from the ill effects of an economic downturn.

At present, Angeles said CDC has secured a combined committed investment of P77.41 billion from 369 signed contracts. These projects are expected to generate about 27,521 workers within a year and an increase to 75,362 workers in five-year period.

Steel Asia prepares industry on steel bar price hike

THE ONSET of the new year has given impetus to most enterprises to examine the prospects and hurdles which are likely to affect business performance in the coming months.

All eyes are transfixed on the inevitable oil and commodities price hikes which immediately impact operational costs and consumer spending.

One industry caught in an anticipated price hit is the construction industry.

Key players in the active building and development sector have expressed concern regarding the fast escalating price of deformed bars.

Since July 2003, the price of deformed bars has gone up to 55 percent. This has created a snowball effect on the pricing of construction projects which end with the developer having to brace itself against higher development cost.

Reasons for price escalation

Steel Asia Manufacturing Corp., the country's leading manufacturer and supplier of steel bars, presents the reasons for this price escalation.

"The price of imported billets (the raw materials used in rolling deformed bars) started going up by 70 percent since the second quarter of 2003," says Renato Soriano, vice president for corporate affairs of Steel Asia. The main supply of the world's billet source including the Philippines comes from Russia and Ukraine.

The billets price increase is due to escalating raw materials costs like scrap, pig ore and met-coke with signs of shortage, very tight supply of billets and rising freight costs.

According to Steel Business Briefing dated Jan. 15, 2004, escalating scrap prices are behind the firming billet prices.

On the same issue, "iron ore prices should rise by at least the same amount as last year (around 9 percent)—and perhaps by as much as 15 percent analysts and mining industry sources tell Steel Business Briefing. Furthermore, "Brazil's CVRD, the world's largest iron ore miner, has forecast that international demand for iron ore will rise from 515 million tons in 2003 to 545 million tons in 2004, a jump of around 5.5 percent."

"China has become a major player in the world's demand for steel. Its massive infrastructure development has increased its steel

consumption from about 90 million tons in 1997 to about 270 million tons with 60 million tons imports in 2003."

According to Soriano, the Philippines consumes only about 2.3 million tons of steel a year.

Soriano also adds that with the major economies recovering well and with the steel demand has surpassed supply, price of steel products including billets are expected to be firm and supply becomes tight.

According to Steel Business Briefing dated Jan. 26, 2004, freight rates for trans-oceanic shipments of steel products have continued rising at a brisk pace since the start of this year.

In addition, a UK shipbroker J.B. Hyde reports that a typical voyage charter rate for shipping steel out of the Black Sea to China has virtually tripled over the last 12 months, from US\$11,000/day to US\$31,000-33,000/day. One reason freight rates are forecast to continue rising is that there is little prospect of any increase in the supply of vessels. This means that there will continue to be too few ships to meet demand for at least the next year or two.

With foreign exchange deterioration which has continually sent shock waves across global economies, the result was inevitably felt in the pricing mix of most commodities.

Tight billet supply

Says Soriano: "Prices of deformed bars are expected to increase up to the third quarter of the year, most likely longer given the above fundamentals. This will be compounded by the very tight billet supply in the coming months."

This situation has caused a proliferation of substandard and underweight products in the structural market. Developers of high integrity, however, discouraged short-term cost cutting which will result in low-quality construction projects which may jeopardize the long-term life of these projects.

"The important consideration now is to be vigilant, prudent and productive," says Soriano. "At Steel Asia, for example, we operate a 24-hour production shift which enables us to deliver on time. And with increased factory output, we are able to maximize manpower productivity which translates to loyal and happy customers."

Seminar on \$27-B Fil-Am market for RP realty industry

THE SOCIETY OF US-Philippines Real Estate Marketing Network in partnership with TCR Realty chaired by Thelma Rodriguez will conduct a seminar-workshop on the \$27-billion Filipino-American market for the Philippine real estate industry on Feb. 6 at 1-6 p.m. at Max's Greenbelt I, Makati City.

The main speaker and facilitator is Ed. T. Pascual, a licensed California and Nevada real estate broker who has been selling Philippine property to Filipino-Americans since 1984.

The seminar will also dwell on the various financing schemes desired by the Filipino American investors as well as the many tax breaks granted by the US government to their citizens when they invest in countries like the Philippines.

Other relevant topics to be discussed are those from Pascual's book, "How to profit from the \$27-billion Filipino-American market," now on sale at Philippine and US major bookstores. If you develop, own, appraise, lend, buy or sell Philippine property, you will find the seminar helpful.

There will also be a business matching session where the attendees will be allowed to discuss their projects with Pascual for eventual marketing to the Filipino-Americans. For details, call 751-4251, 750-7259, 896-9757, 812-4872 or 0916-5293216.

IEB Premium Properties opens Garden Heights

IEB Premium Properties, a wholly owned subsidiary of International Exchange Bank (IEB), recently inaugurated Garden Heights, a 23-story commercial and residential condominium on E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon City.

Among the value-added features of Garden Heights are a 9-hole mini golf putting green, three viewing decks overlooking the rolling hills of Antipolo and an artificially designed Tai-chi multifunction deck.

Garden Heights, which is now ready for occupancy, is equipped with modern necessities and conveniences such as water reservoir, a fire alarm and sprinkler system, standby power generator, individual intercom units and a centralized garbage disposal system.

IEB Premium Properties has made it easier for prospective buyers to own Garden Heights units through in-house financing terms of up to 15 years as well as a scheme that allows the buyer to pay the initial down payment over six months at no interest.

a property low. If the borrower wants to maximize the loanable amount, a wise move would be to apply for a loan to at least three lenders. By this, the borrower can choose the one that will be the most beneficial.

For comments and advice you may reach the author at aaacacio@pacific.net.ph.

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Citigroup gives RP 'underweight' rating

By Doris C. Dumlaog

THE PHILIPPINES might get a smaller slice of Citigroup Private Bank's investment pie this year due to lingering political concerns.

In its global economic outlook released yesterday, CPB said it liked Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan and Hong Kong equities due to their "higher growth prospects."

The outlook was not so rosy for the Philippines because of what CPB referred to as the country's "lingering political challenges and the lack of fundamental upside."

Ravi Raju, CPB's head for investments in Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, said the recommendation was based on how the Philippines fared against other Asian countries.

"If you look at the Philippines in the context of other countries, you'll find that it's not as lever-

aged compared to Thailand or Taiwan. That does not mean we do not like it," Raju explained.

The American bank, however, remained optimistic about the country's private wealth management market.

"The Philippine market is extremely important to us. Our presence in the country stretches beyond 100 years and some of our client relationships have spanned a few generations," CPB head for the Philippines Akbar Shah said.

"There is still much untapped potential in the market, which is why we have expanded our onshore capabilities in terms of bankers, specialists and peso-denominated products," Shah added.

On the global front, CPB's New York-based global investment strategist Clark Winter said there were "more opportunities" as well as "continued uncertainty" in 2004.

Yamaha expects 66% rise in motorcycle sales in '04

By Michelle V. Remo

MOTORCYCLE maker Yamaha Motor Co. Ltd. of Japan expects its sales to grow by as much as 66 percent this year on the back of an aggressive marketing campaign and the introduction of new models.

According to Manuel Gaspar E. Albos, senior vice president for marketing, Yamaha expects sales to hit about P3 billion this year from P1.8 billion in 2003.

The P3-billion target for the year translates to the sale of about 60,000 motorcycle units compared with 48,500 units sold last year.

"The company's overall assessment is that the business environment will be good for the industry. Motorcycle manufacturers in the country are optimistic the Philippines will soon reach the revenue levels of Thailand and

Indonesia," said Albos.

Indonesia and Thailand are the two biggest motorcycle producers in Southeast Asia.

Albos also said Yamaha hoped to grab a bigger share of the motorcycle market from its 10 percent level last year.

Rival Honda currently accounts for about 45 percent of the market.

Yamaha yesterday introduced its new models Crypton R (P48,500 per unit) and Crypton Z (P56,500).

"This is the first year that Yamaha will be aggressive in (marketing) solo motorcycles. The introduction of the two new models is only the beginning," he said.

Albos said Yamaha would bank on demand from first-time motorcycle buyers.

New motorcycle owners accounted for about 75 percent of sales last year.



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LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso



There is no cure for the nasty Buerger's Disease, which can disfigure you for life. The only way to control the symptoms is to quit smoking

Light up and lose your toes

By Anne A. Jambora

SMOKING can cost you an arm and a leg—literally. I nearly lost my right big toe. No kidding.

I had it lucky, my doctors say, that I quit the nasty habit in time. Otherwise, who knows? I might have lost all toes, or eight of them, or a few fingers.

Heck, some people even have had their leg, from knee below, amputated, or an arm cut off. It's a slow, extremely painful death for stubborn nicotine diehards with their limbs removed, one at a time, until nothing is left to sever.

Your tissues decay and rot, so a toe or finger can die while you're still alive. It's a disease that literally eats you up, and will continue to leisurately putrefy your body unless you stop smoking. And when your living cells start to die on you, the pain you go through is unimaginable.

This condition is called *thromboangiitis obliterans*, or Buerger's Disease.

Like everybody else, I knew the common penalties of lighting up a cig, which included numerous types of cancers and a host of other diseases.

But my poor toe? The government warning on cigarette boxes—"smoking is dangerous to your health"—couldn't be more vague.

'Autoimmune' reaction

Buerger's Disease is a rare acute inflammation and clotting of blood vessels in the body's extremities (the hands and feet), said to be an "autoimmune" reaction—the body's immune system attacks the body's own tissues—triggered by some constituent of tobacco.

The narrowing of the vessels causes restriction of blood flow, and that's when Murphy's Law manifests in your life. For when blood supply is zilch, life can no longer be sustained. But, oh, you have to live through the nightmare.

My condition began on Nov. 21, 2002. It was a typical day—I woke up, hit the gym, went home, took a shower, had lunch, took off. Suddenly, my life was rudely interrupted.

That evening I went home limping, my big right toe throbbing wildly, piercing pain shooting through it. There were no cuts, no discoloration, nothing. And yet clearly something was wrong.

But it's just a teeny-tiny toe, you say, surely it can't be that bad? Still, imagine the pain when a nail is driven into your toe and mercilessly hammered down. It throbs, it stings, it swells until you think it's going to burst, and it's there whether you're walking or standing or sitting or lying down.

Bedtime was an ordeal as I increasingly found it hard to sleep. Some nights I had to dangle my leg from the bed to ease the pain. I was popping pain relievers like candy into my mouth, and not one of them worked.

I was given a slew of antibiotics to ram down my throat—first, second, third, fourth generations—to no avail. I felt like a messed-up pill storage machine. My toe continued to throb, and I continued to puff away.

Frustrated, I removed half the toenail from its nail bed in a crazy notion that it might stop the pain. It's dumb, I know. Big mistake. Naturally, it bled, and an infection followed promptly.

Temporary relief

By February 2003 I had my entire toenail

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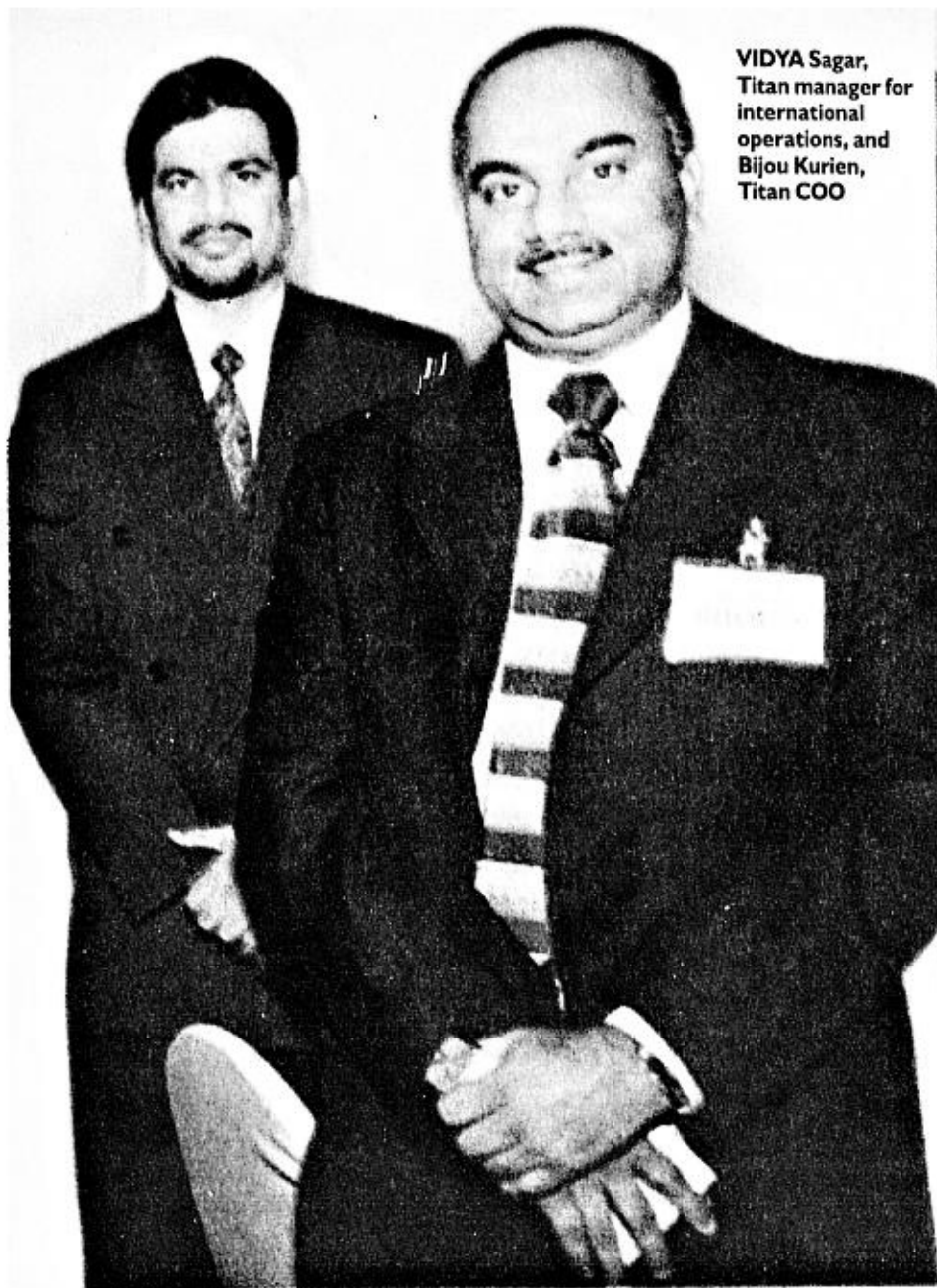
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VIDYA Sagar, Titan manager for international operations, and Bijou Kurien, Titan COO



NEW Trends general manager Murli Menon, Bijou Kurien and Miss World Yukta Mookhey (right) congratulate Louie Ocampo of Ocampo's Jewellery and Lorena Madgara of Metro Gaisano, winners of Titan gold wristwatches.



BIANCA Valero checks out some of Titan's new designs.

Giant of a watch



TITAN managing director Bhaskar Bhat and sales manager for Asia Pacific Jayshankar Menon



MEERA Hanish, Asia Pacific marketing head, and Michael Foley, award-winning head designer of Titan



TITAN'S followers. Sales director Sanju Khemlani and Victor Siasat of Guess



SM's mega hotshot, cool Hans Sy



MISS World Yukta Mookhey charms her audience.

SHE was like a breath of fresh air, real cool and fun, great to be with, *naturellement*. I'm talking about that exotic beauty Yukta Mookhey, dahlings. She was Miss India 1999 and became Miss World that same year.

Now she's been busy-busy with her budding career as an actress, and her different charity activities. Her recent visit to Manila, *palangas*, was part of her job as official endorser of the new world watch, Titan Watches, no less.

New Trends International, official distributor of Titan Watches in the Philippines, hosted a super fun party at the Peninsula Manila to launch the watch brand. The *tres charmante* and effervescent Yukta played host.

One of the best watches *moi* noticed immediately that evening was Titan's flagship product—the Edge—which, I was told, "took three years of research and development and is considered the slimmest quartz watch in the universe."

Titan Industries Limited of India is the sixth largest manufacturer of watches in the world. Its products are sold in over 30 countries worldwide. Aside from the Edge, Titan manufactures a wide range of stylish and ultra-fashionable watches.

The collection also includes gold watches with a one-year warranty on the gold plating. Super glam, *palangas*.

Other *tres* interesting individuals at the launch were Titan's mega hotshots like Bhaskar Bhat, managing director; Bijou Kurien, chief operating officer; Meera Hanish, head of the Asia-Pacific region office; and observant Michael Foley, the award-winning designer of the Titan Edge; plus the New Trends International rah-rah team, who arrived in full force.

To show we were not lacking in beauties ourselves, three of our very own beauty queens were there: Binibining Pilipinas-World titlists Rachel Soriano (1998), Kate Manalo (2002)

and Annwen de Guzman (2000).

Other namedroppables were well-respected business tycoon Hans Sy of Shoemart, Victor Siasat, promising members of T-H-E Gaisano familie; and the Indian Ambassador, Navreka Sharma, *natch!*

Fine prints

It was *tres* interesting, super different and absolutely fun, *palangas*, the exhibition of fine prints by talented contemporary Filipino printmakers, which opened at the Alliance Française Total Gallery.

"Mirrored Images" consisted of 24 fantastic prints in varied techniques, 12 of which were included in the super limited edition portfolio with the same title.

Brought together by their passion for printmaking, the brilliant young visual artists share a common goal: "to revitalize the practice of producing 'portfolios of fine prints' for its many benefits." Hot artists like Ambie Abano, Benjamin Torrado Cabrera, Cha Rodrigo, Tita Rosel and Jess Flores were joined by two New York-based Filipino printmakers, Lenore RS Lim, and the high priest, father of Philippine printmaking himself, Manuel Rodriguez Sr. no less, dahlings.

The title signified the varied individual expressions that reflected the artists' "sensibilities, consciousness and personal concerns."

"Mirror image" also connotes the characteristic outcome of, or effect derived from, a direct transfer of an image onto paper, through the skilled techniques used in printmaking.

All works in the portfolio were prints pulled from metal plates, limited to etching, aquatint, engraving and mezzotint, plus explorations in other techniques.

Needless to say, *palangas*, the artists went home with pride, after most of their works were marked with red dots.

As in "Sold!"

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen on Kodak Max



BENJIE Cabrera explains his work to some Japanese friends.



ADMIRING "Mirrored Images." Lenore RS Lim, Cecile Ascalon, Cynthia Henson and Ambie Abano.



THE BIG THREE. Alliance Française deputy director Bruno Lebrault flanked by cultural and PR assistants Christine Sace and Jorel Legaspi



THE EXHIBITING brilliant artists: Jess Flores, Tita Rosel, New York-based Lenore RS Lim, Cha Rodrigo, Ambie Abano and Benjie Cabrera



ART LOVERS. Czech Embassy consul Jana Chaloupkova and French Embassy cultural counselor Franck Hebert



RAUL Isidro, president of the Philippine Association of Printmakers

CHRISTINE Carlos

You can gain weight on a low-carb diet

YOU know a diet has become a cultural phenomenon when it influences the business decisions of the food industry. The high-carbohydrate, low-fat diet "reigned" in the last 10 years and its impact was obvious in the proliferation of thousands of low-fat products.

Well, times are a-changing and a major revolution is going on in the American food industry. And where America goes, the rest of the Westernized world is sure to follow.

Supermarket aisles that used to be devoted to low-fat food products have been transformed into low-carb diet sections. In California (where else?), a stand-alone store carrying only low-carb products opened last month. It has plans to open 5,000 branches. Convenience store giant 7-11 has jumped into the low-carb bandwagon with nearly 50

products.

Restaurant chains like TGI Friday's and Chili's have now included low-carb selections in their menus. Not to be outdone, Burger King has a bun-less Whopper, Subway has a low-carb wrap, while Carl's Jr. has a lettuce-wrapped burger.

Snack food manufacturers have also gotten the hint that low-fat is a thing of the past and low-carb is the way of the future. Low-carb chips, cookies and brownies made their entrance last year. To wash it all down, you can buy low-carb beers like Michelob Ultra and the soon-to-be launched Coors Aspen Edge.

Bread and pasta makers have also seen the handwriting on the wall and are either already offering or are developing low-carb bread, pasta, bagels and doughnuts.

The low-carb phenomenon can

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan



be traced directly to the success and popularity of the Atkins diet, created by the late Dr. Robert Atkins in the '70s, but which became a household word only in the last five years.

The original Atkins diet consists mainly of meat and green leafy vegetables. But, judging from the amount of money spent on low-carb products (\$15 billion last year and up to \$30 billion this year, according to LowCarbiz, a trade newsletter), people cannot take being deprived of bread and pasta for long and are desperately searching for carb substitutes



ILLUSTRATION: LUIS MISTADES

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Inner thigh stretch on stability ball



THIS exercise stretches the muscles in the inner thigh.

Equipment:

Stability ball. As a substitute, you can use a chair.

Exercise technique:

1. Sit on the edge of the ball with both legs opened wide and your feet facing outward.
2. Straighten your right leg and point your right foot forward.

3. Roll the ball toward your left leg until you feel the stretch in your right inner thigh.
4. Hold for the desired length of time. Switch sides.

Performance tips:

1. Sit tall. Don't allow yourself to slouch.
2. Keep breathing as you hold the position.

Repetitions:

Hold the stretch for 10-30 seconds. Do it once or twice.

so they can have their cake and eat it, too.

How to produce a low-carb product

To reduce the carbohydrate content of a high-carbohydrate product like a muffin, manufacturers substitute flour from almonds or soy for wheat flour and use a sugar substitute like Splenda, aspartame or some other sweetener with almost zero calories instead of sugars like fructose and glucose.

As to be expected, taste and texture are compromised while manufacturing expenses rise. The product may be low in carbohydrates but also low in taste and high in cost.

What it may not be so low in is calories. When something is taken out, the substitute does not always have less calories. This is what happens to many low-fat products. They are low in fat but high in carbohydrates and sugar. Low-carb products may be low in carbs but high in fat and protein.

Confusion over terms

A creative way to produce a low-carb product is to manipulate the definition of the term. Since this is all new territory, anything goes. Currently, there are no government standards for "low-carb."

Pick up any processed food product and the mandatory nutrition label will list the amount of "total carbohydrates" in grams.

Many low-carb food manufacturers use a term called "net carbs," which can be much lower than the actual total carbohydrates. The term refers to the amount derived after subtracting

carbohydrate grams from fiber and sugar alcohol in the product.

Manufacturers say carbohydrates from fiber and sugar alcohol do not make blood sugar levels rise as quickly and as high as carbohydrates from starch and simple sugars like fructose and glucose and, therefore, won't make you gain weight. So, a product could have a total carbohydrate content of 22 grams but only two net carb grams.

Guess which figure is printed prominently on the front label? Naturally, the lower figure. Guess which product you are more likely to buy and consume in greater quantities if you are a low-carb dieter? Naturally, the product that claims to have less carbohydrates.

You may be tempted to eat more than you should, thinking you are only consuming two net carb grams (eight calories) instead of 22 grams (88 calories).

To add to the confusion, terms like effective carbs, fit carbs, impact carbs and net-effective carbs are also used.

Whether this is manipulating the truth or not will only be settled after the government steps in to regulate this new industry.

Gaining weight on a low-carb diet

When the low-fat diet was king, people ate low-fat products with abandon, believing they would not gain weight. Health authorities agree this belief and behavior partly contributed to the rise in obesity levels and eventually triggered massive disillusionment with low-fat dieting.

With low-carb products now

dominating the market, experts predict that people will begin to gain weight in spite of eating a low-carb diet or "low-carbing" (a verb that is gaining in usage) since they are paying little attention to the total amount of calories they are eating.

Actually, that prediction is already coming true. According to an article in USA Today by Nancy Hellmich, "Experts staffing the Atkins customer information service are getting calls and questions online from disappointed dieters who can't understand why they aren't losing weight. The problem: Dieters are eating too many of these new low-carb protein bars, muffins and brownie mixes, which are low in carbohydrates but often high in calories."

Hellmich reports that the clinic of Dr. Arthur Agatston, author of "The South Beach Diet," has its share of patients who "have gotten tripped up by eating too many low-carb, high-calorie products."

Marie Almon, a registered dietician who works for Agatston, told Hellmich that "one woman on the diet was treating herself twice a day to a piece of low-carb cheesecake and she was wondering why she was gaining weight."

Calories still count

No matter how you look at it and no matter which diet format you follow, whether low-fat or low-carb, when it comes to weight loss, calories still matter.

So, when low-carb products start appearing on local supermarket shelves, don't say you weren't warned. Use your common sense and look at how many calories you will actually be eating.

Light up and lose your toes

From page C1

surgically removed. Ouch! I was assured the throbbing would stop, and sleep would finally visit me at night.

And it did—temporarily. By March my toe had swelled again, screaming red as the pain slowly crept up. Not long after, the rest of my toes were inflamed, then my whole foot, then up my ankles.

I couldn't walk anymore. My entire foot throbbed, painfully gnawing at my sanity as well and impairing my ability to concentrate. I strained my ears just to barely hear a friend's chatter, and focused hard to keep up with even the most idiotic of small talks.

I couldn't read, not even watch television. I smoked all the more to relax, reaching for my pack whenever I needed a diversion.

By April 21 I was wheeled into the ER and admitted to the hospital. Antibiotics were administered intravenously, and I was given round-the-clock oral painkillers. Didn't work. So along with the oral painkillers I was given morphine. Didn't work either. I went from worse to worst. Even the sleeping pills failed to make me sleep!

I was discharged in May, in a wheelchair, one foot darker than the other. By May 21, I was in the operating room once more to have my growing toenail removed—again. A deep incision was also made on my toe that exposed my tendons. Another infection, that's why.

Poor blood circulation in my foot, however, made it difficult for my wounds to heal. My toe continued to throb, and the incision grew wider each day. Eventually my tendon was cut off. It was dangling like a thread anyway.

Quit smoking

Throughout summer I was in severe pain, and it doubled the second I stood up. My

movements were limited even when I had to use the bathroom. It was sheer torture to bathe myself every morning.

Finally, on June 3, I ended my 13-year nicotine addiction—my fourth attempt to stop smoking. Slowly my condition improved. I was able to bend my foot without grimacing in pain and, much later, move my toes that were once bloated stiff.

I started walking again, not with crutches but with a cane in one hand. By September I was rid of my cane, taking one awkward step after the other. By Nov. 17, I was back in the gym, and a week after was off painkillers. At last, I was able to sleep without popping pills.

I was diagnosed with Buerger's Disease officially only last December. Prior to that, I underwent several tests to rule out other conditions such as gout, diabetes, etc.

There is no cure for Buerger's Disease. The damage is irreversible. The only way to control the symptoms is to quit smoking.

My hospital bills alone totaled almost P200,000, excluding the thousands I spent every month on medicines.

My battle is far from over. Today, my toenail has yet to grow back properly. It probably never will, but I haven't completely given up on it.

I am still on medication and, yes, my toe still hurts occasionally. It might take two years for my blood circulation to be okay again, if ever.

But for now, my toe is once again useful. I can at last walk properly—and finally wear shoes—like everyone else. Who knows, tomorrow I just might be able to run again.

E-mail the author at ajambora@inquirer.com.ph

State-of-the-art sports shoes

SPORTS Resources Inc., exclusive distributor of Prince sports products in the Philippines, introduces its line of performance tennis and indoor shoes: the NFF Low, QT Men's Response, QT Women's Approach, NFS Men's Indoor II 1.0, and QT Scream Indoor.

The shoes boast of state-of-the-art features and trendy designs. They can be worn in and out of the courts.

The NFF (Natural Foot Fit) Low has a new patented MemoryFit technology and 2Win-Lock Lacing System. They wrap around the foot like a glove for a snug fit.

The patented QT or QuikTrac footwear line offers the same comfortable fit, with stability features and performance cushioning. In the Philippines, the shoes will be available as QT Men's Response, QT Women's Approach and QT Scream Indoor.

QT shoes' state-of-the-art features include EVA midsole with PU forefoot insert for optimum on-court agility and comfort, ShockEraser2 heel insert for



optimum shock dispersion for optimum comfort, molded titanium reinforced midfoot shank, removable EVA sockliner with padded EVA barefoot and heel inserts with anti-bacterial treatment.

The NFS (Natural Foot Shape) Men's Indoor offers added maximum comfort and fit to performance footwear. It has,

among others, rubber outsole, lightweight EVA midsole, removable EVA sockliner, midfoot webbing, extreme toe drag, medial drag abrasion, soft synthetic leather upper and slip lasted construction.

Prince Tennis and Indoor Shoes are now available at all Toby's Metro Manila outlets.

Ensuring quality hospital service

TO most people total quality and value for money are important.

The International Standards for Organizations seal (better known as ISO) using international standards developed by distinguished organizations has become the consumer's guarantee of quality.

The Joint Commission International (JCI) is among those groups that set high quality care standards. Accreditation by JCI is the gold seal of recognition for health care providers. JCI has set standards that help hospitals achieve the highest performance possible and create an environment for continuous improvement. Its accreditation signifies a hospital's desire to provide the best service.

JCI is a subsidiary of the Joint Com-

mission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). The international accreditation program was launched in 1999.

A 16-member team representing seven major regions of the world developed standards that were internationally applicable. The standards were based on international consensus standards. They set uniform, attainable expectations for structures, processes and outcomes for hospitals.

Standards assess organizational performance and stimulate continuous improvements. JCI has so far accredited 42 hospitals in 11 countries outside of the United States and Canada.

An organization wishing to apply for Joint Commission International Accreditation (JCIA) should submit doc-

uments with a comprehensive description of itself, along with essential information. Application for survey must include all official records, reports and documents pertaining to licensing, regulatory and government requirements.

JCIA must be given authority to obtain any records and reports.

An eligible organization is subjected to rigid and thorough accreditation survey evaluating its compliance with JCI standards. Surveys can take 3-5 days.

Accreditation is valid for three years, during which an organization is expected to maintain the standards and quality improvement process. At the end of the period, the organization must re-apply for accreditation.

10 keys to mastering the self

EVERYONE has the power to heal himself or herself. While there is no easy way to achieve this, countless self-help books have been written on the subject.

Here is a set of guidelines from one of my favorite gurus, Dr. Deepak Chopra:

INSIDE OUT



Cory Quirino

Listen to your body. The human body has wisdom. Its means of expression is aches, pains and discomforts. Attend to your pain and see your physician soonest.

Emotional pain is easily discerned, too. When faced with a choice in behavior or action, ask your body, "What is your feeling about this?" If there is any sign of emotional or physical discomfort, hold back. If you get a pleasant feeling, then go ahead.

Live in the now. The present is all you really have. Pay attention to what you have and who you are now. Make every moment count. Let things be and allow them to flow naturally. Struggling against a situation will only cause stress. So trust in the wisdom of your present reality.

Make time for silence. Your inner life thrives in silence, not in noise. When you are guided by the spirit, your thinking is clearer and your attention more focused.

Stop looking for external approval. Begin liberating yourself by relying on self-motivation. Seeking the approval of others may diminish your own inner power. When you rely on yourself, your inner worth will grow. When you rely more on others for approval, you weaken your inner worth.

Let go of your anger. Giving in to anger or acting in extreme opposition to someone weakens you. Anger is a struggle with emotions, which is a part of yourself. It means you have no power over yourself.

What you most hate in someone is also what you most deny in yourself. What you love most is what you want most for yourself. This is the mirror of relationships. When you have better self-knowledge, you will understand the depth of this message.

Do not burden yourself by judg-

Emotion	Bodily sensation	Breathing patterns	Posture
loss, sorrow, bereavement	hollow, empty feeling in the pit of stomach	spasmodic, sobbing, superficial breathing	
fear/anxiety	tight muscles, racing heart, dry mouth, pounding head	rapid, shallow, irregular	body hunched, contracted
guilt	burdened by a heavy weight, feeling pushed down	suffocation, confined breathing	stiff neck/ back
anger	tense body, hands tightened into fists, widening of nostrils	shallow inhalation, panting	
joy/ compassion	openness of posture, palms open, warmth	deep, regular breathing	back erect, neck and spine aligned

ing others—even yourself. All things can be understood and eventually forgiven. If you judge all the time, you cut off understanding.

Your body, mind and spirit are not toxic waste dumpsites. Don't contaminate your body with unhealthy diets. Do not pollute your mind and heart with negative emotions like fear and doubt. What is inside you will reflect on the outside.

Behavior should be motivated by love not by fear. Fear results from memory that refuses to forget past hurts and disappointments. When you remember what hurt you before, you use your energy to protect yourself from getting hurt again. But you cannot impose the past on the present, and this cannot insulate you from future pain. When you are secure about yourself, you are powered by love.

The universe is moved by a force and intelligence called God. The more aligned you are to this power, the stronger you will be, and your life will be more directed.

Breath of life

An integral part of mastering the self is breathing. This is the way to control the energy of *prana* that enters and leaves our body. It is believed that changing our breathing pattern also alters the emotions.

In one case, agitated hospital patients were asked to breathe slowly. Almost immediately, they became calm.

The breath of life can be conserved

through fresh food, pure air and water, sunlight, moderate exercise, balanced refined breath, non-violent behavior and reverence for life, loving and positive emotions (and their free expression).

In India, various systems of yoga teach controlled breathing exercises or *Pranayama* aimed at releasing stress and letting the body find balance.

Find out your emotion and its breathing patterns in a chart on this page.

De-stress breathing exercise

Play soft, gentle music or, if you like, sit outdoors and listen to the wind, running water or birds. Let the music flow in and out of your ears and exhale. Repeat, letting the music flow through your eyes, now your nostrils and mouth, then your entire body.

Focus your attention on the chest. Breathe in and out through your heart. Now, be silent and become more aware of your body. This exercise is great for relaxing the nervous system and it teaches harmony with nature.

Coco milk bath:

In a tub of warm water, mix one pail (about eight full glasses of coconut milk, fresh is better but powdered/canned will do). Add 10 drops of vanilla to sweeten your soak bath. Forget your cares... Relax, enjoy. Love and light!

Reference: "Ageless Body, Timeless Mind" by Dr. Deepak Chopra

Setting the record straight

Part 1

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About a hundred guests attended, including (at the risk of sounding like Maurice Arcache): INQUIRER columnist Cory Quirino, Rosanna Rocas, Roy Alvarez, former tourism secretary Antonio Gonzalez, former health secretary Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan, television host and INQUIRER columnist Ramon Tulfo, newspaper columnist Fr. Bel San Luis, SVD; enneagram expert Fr. Joey de Leon, SJ; Anvil Publishing Inc. assistant general manager Karina Bolasco; Brazilian Embassy's Minister Counselor Carlos de Carvalho; wife of the Portuguese Ambassador, Ulrike Caetano da Silva; University of the Philippines professor Jun de Leon; angelologist Cecile Gutierrez (mother of Chin Chin); writers Gilda Cordero Fernando and Mariel Francisco; several doctors of medicine; psychics; businessmen; healers; and writers.

Sir Jason Winters, who wrote the foreword to the book, was stranded in Singapore but faxed a message. Later in the evening, former senator and education secretary Raul S. Roco came, gave brief remarks and charmed the remaining guests.

Explanation

The following is the speech I made during the launching, explaining why I wrote the book:

"A book does not just spring out of nowhere. It is a product of close collaboration of many people. So before I talk about this 13th book of mine, I would like to acknowledge several people who made this book possible.

"First, I want to thank the countless readers of my column, 'Inner Awareness,' in the Philippine Daily Inquirer and the many listeners of my weekly educational program, 'Inner Mind on Radio,' over dzMM, who asked questions and gave their comments on the various topics discussed.

"I thank Chelo Banal-Formoso, lifestyle section editor of INQUIRER and her staff, for their constant support and confidence in this writer. The same expression of gratitude goes to INQUIRER editor in chief, Letty

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licaucou



Jimenez-Magsanoc, who has kept me on board for the last 16 years.

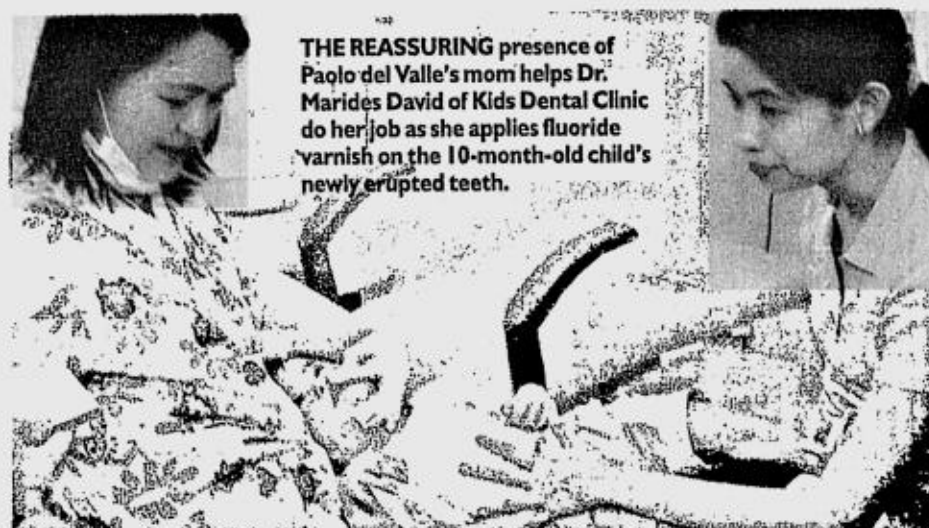
"Of course, I should not forget my publisher, Anvil Publishing Inc., represented here by its assistant general manager, Karina Bolasco, and her staff, for their encouragement and support; and also the effervescent Ces Drilon for hosting this book launching and cocktails in this beautiful gallery and magazine shop.

"Now, as to why I came out with this book, 'On Christianity, New Age and Reincarnation, New Perspectives on Old Religious Issues.' Well, I must thank my critics, led by Rev. Romeo Intengan, SJ, head of the Jesuit Order in the Philippines; and the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), whose false accusations that I am engaged in so-called 'occult practices' and whose unfair and malicious inclusion of my name in its Primer on New Age, made me decide to come out with this book to explain my side of the controversy, and define for them and the general public what it is that I really do and what I believe in.

"In the course of researching materials for inclusion in this book, it became very clear to me that I must expand its coverage to include other religious issues that the Church has either ignored or even suppressed, such as reincarnation, and the contents of the lost Gnostic gospels that were found in Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt in 1945, and the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947 at the Qumran caves."

The new book is now available in all branches of National Book Store, PowerBooks and MagNet

Address letters to this column to 308 Prince Plaza 1, 106 Legaspi St., Greenbelt, Makati City. Call 8107245 or 8926806. E-mail jlicaucou@edsamail.com.ph. Visit my website at <http://jlicaucou.tripod.com>. Listen to my dzMM radio program every Sunday, 6-8 p.m.



THE REASSURING presence of Paolo del Valle's mom helps Dr. Marides David of Kids Dental Clinic do her job as she applies fluoride varnish on the 10-month-old child's newly erupted teeth.

Oral hygiene must begin early

PARENTS should help their children establish good oral hygiene practices as early as possible.

Dr. Marides David of the Kids Dental Clinic at SM Manila said parents should not wait for an emergency like a tooth infection before bringing a child to a dentist. The practice makes the child think of a dental visit as a painful experience, creating a negative impression about the dentist, the treatment and the clinic.

A child must be brought to the dentist for his/her first visit as soon as the first primary tooth comes out, between six to 12 months of age, Dr. David said. The visit will enable the dentist to teach parents the proper way to take care of their child's teeth to prevent serious dental problems and to familiarize the child with the dentist and the clinic setting.

Dr. David said their clinic could teach parents properly the different ways to care for their children's teeth so that milk or primary teeth will be replaced by strong permanent

ones. Dr. David is assisted by three pediatric dentists—Dr. Shane Martinez, Dr. Veron Sison, Dr. Gay Ralario; and one general dentist, Dr. Car Espino.

For starters, the team recommends a fluoride varnish treatment for infants and toddlers who easily develop tooth decay because they are frequently put to bed with a milk bottle. Ideally, they should have the treatment every four months. Tooth sealant should be applied on newly erupted teeth of a child between 6-12 years old. A clear or opaque plastic material, the sealant is applied to the chewing surfaces of the teeth to "seal out" food and plaque, thus reducing tooth decay.

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Take Charge Doc!

Nicky S. Montoya, M.D.



Looking to learn more about your benefits under your MEDICard coverage? Do you want to be clear on the procedures, which allow you to avail of MEDICard's services? Get your information straight from MEDICard's Medical Director, DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA.

FAQs (frequently asked questions)

How do I make sure that all the health services being rendered to me are covered under my program?

The easiest way to make sure that all healthcare services received are covered is to follow the guidelines and procedures in your MEDICard guidebook. That requires having all care arranged through the medical coordinator and making sure that authorizations are obtained, as required before receiving services. The medical coordinator will discuss with you any limits or exclusions in your healthcare program. When in need of further assistance, you can reach our 24/7 call center at 841-8080 or 867-2020.

Meet your MEDICard Team



Recently accredited MEDICard healthcare provider Dr. Marlo R. Ver specializes in Orthopedics. Dr. Ver, a Medicine graduate of UERM-MMC, finished his residency for his specialization at UP-PGH. He also subspecializes in spine surgeries. Doc Marlo, as he is frequently referred to, is a Fellow of the Philippine Orthopedic Association and the Philippine College of Surgeons. He is also a Director of the Philippine Spine Society. For your consultation needs, you may visit his clinic at Room 802, Cathedral Heights Bldg. of St. Luke's Medical Center (SLMC) from Mondays to Fridays, 2 to 6 PM and on Saturdays from 10 AM to 12 noon and again from 2 to 6 PM.

PBSP Recognition



MEDICard joins Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), a social development foundation dedicated to helping Filipino people rise from poverty. MEDICard President Dr. Nicanor Montoya received a plaque from PBSP Chair, Manuel Pangilinan (2nd from L) and PBSP President, Ma. Luisa Perez-Rubio (3rd from L) during a recently concluded recognition of members. With this new partnership, MEDICard pledges to set aside out of its operating funds an amount devoted to social development through the foundation.

We encourage all MEDICard members to voice out their concerns and issues at hand. BE HEARD AND BE READ. You can write DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA at 9/F Sagittarius Bldg. H.V. De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com. For feedback on avallment of our services, e-mail us at feedback@medicardphils.com.

For inquiries on individual or family membership, dial 818-2161. For group or corporate membership, dial 812-8360, 817-5136 or 817-4985 and look for a membership consultant. For Cebu Sales Office call (032) 253-5031; For Davao Sales Office call (082) 224-6931/305-3386.

TEXT MEDICARD: Key in MEDICARD and send to 2344 (Globe & Touch Mobile) or 4627 (Smart & Talk N' Text). VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.medicardphils.com.

MEDICard is the first HMO in the Philippines and the whole Asia Pacific Region to be ISO CERTIFIED



Advt.



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INNER AWARENESS

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Jimenez-Magsanoc, who has kept me on board for the last 16 years.

"Of course, I should not forget my publisher, Anvil Publishing Inc., represented here by its assistant general manager, Karina Bolasco, and her staff, for their encouragement and support; and also the effervescent Ces Drilon for hosting this book launching and cocktails in this beautiful gallery and magazine shop.

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Nicky S. Montoya, M.D.



Looking to learn more about your benefits under your MEDICard coverage? Do you want to be clear on the procedures, which allow you to avail of MEDICard's services? Get your information straight from MEDICard's Medical Director, DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA.

FAQs (frequently asked questions)

How do I make sure that all the health services being rendered to me are covered under my program?

The easiest way to make sure that all healthcare services received are covered is to follow the guidelines and procedures in your MEDICard guidebook. That requires having all care arranged through the medical coordinator and making sure that authorizations are obtained, as required before receiving services. The medical coordinator will discuss with you any limits or exclusions in your healthcare program. When in need of further assistance, you can reach our 24/7 call center at 841-8080 or 867-2020.

Meet your MEDICard Team

Recently accredited MEDICard healthcare provider Dr. Marlo R. Ver specializes in Orthopedics. Dr. Ver, a Medicine graduate of UERM-MMC, finished his residency for his specialization at UP-PGH. He also subspecializes in spine surgeries. Doc Marlo, as he is frequently referred to, is a Fellow of the Philippine Orthopedic Association and the Philippine College of Surgeons. He is also a Director of the Philippine Spine Society. For your consultation needs, you may visit his clinic at Room 802, Cathedral Heights Bldg. of St. Luke's Medical Center (SLMC) from Mondays to Fridays, 2 to 6 PM and on Saturdays from 10 AM to 12 noon and again from 2 to 6 PM.

PBSP Recognition



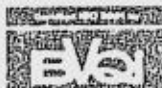
MEDICard joins Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), a social development foundation dedicated to helping Filipino people rise from poverty. MEDICard President Dr. Nicanor Montoya received a plaque from PBSP Chair, Manuel Pangilinan (2nd from L) and PBSP President, Ma Luisa Perez-Rubio (3rd from L) during a recently concluded recognition of members. With this new partnership, MEDICard pledges to set aside out of its operating funds an amount devoted to social development through the foundation.

We encourage all MEDICard members to voice out their concerns and issues at hand. **BE HEARD AND BE READ.** You can write DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA at 9/F Sagittarius Bldg. H.V. De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com. For feedback on availability of our services, e-mail us at feedback@medicardphils.com.

For inquiries on individual or family membership, dial 818-2161. For group or corporate membership, dial 812-8360, 817-5136 or 817-4985 and look for a membership consultant. For Cebu Sales Office call (032) 253-5031; For Davao Sales Office call (082) 224-6931/305-3386.

TEXT MEDICARD: Key in MEDICARD and send to 2344 (Globe & Touch Mobile) or 4627 (Smart & Talk N' Text). VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.medicardphils.com.

MEDICard is the first HMO in the Philippines and the whole Asia Pacific Region to be ISO CERTIFIED



Advt.